God's Communicating Door

Rev. H. Adye Prichard

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GOD'S COMMUNICATING DOOR

Some Suggestions From the Philosophy of Psychic Research

By the

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PREFACE

These pages are addressed to the earnest, the loving, and the bereaved.

The thoughts in the short essays that follow are merely suggestions. There is nothing complete or final about them, but I do believe, with all my heart, that there is a practically untouched store of spiritual strength and comfort in a sane and reverent approach to the study of certain psychic phenomena; and if any word of mine could help to open a crack in the door that a gleam of that treasure might be seen, I should be amply repaid for my temerity in producing this little volume.

I have had no first-hand experience of the usual spiritualistic machinery, such as contact with mediums, seances, etc., and my conclusions rest merely upon a fairly comprehensive reading on all angles of this subject, and much conversation with those who have had first-hand experience. The conclusions, which have come from these sources, seem to me to fit into an ordinary intellectual approach to life. And for the benefit of those who have not had the time or the opportunity to read many of the books that have been written about Psychic Research, I place these thoughts as clearly and convincingly as I can before them.

The book pretends to no scholarship, and has no brief to prove. Its only excuse is the desire to clear the ground

of approach to this subject still more, for reasonable and reverent thinkers.

Two of these essays have appeared in Church periodicals, and four have been printed for a limited private circulation.

St. Mark's Rectory,
Mt. Kisco, N. Y. H. ADYE PRICHARD.
December 21, 1928.

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GOD'S COMMUNICATING DOOR

I

THE VALUE OF DEATH

To some persons this phrase would seem to be a contradiction in terms. How, they might say, could there be any value in something which is the end of activity; in something which brings darkness where before there was light; in something which so changes conditions as to make all previous attainment and all previous training of no effect? Those who argue in such a way are, of course, entirely begging the question. There would be no value in death if these statements really represented the nature of death—a thing which the Christian cannot possibly believe. Value is the result of the use of something. Money, for instance, only has value as it is put in circulation. A man might have a million dollars in gold, but, if he lived on an uninhabited island, that gold would have no more value for him than a pile of pebbles on the beach, because he could not use it. And so death —if death does not eventuate in some kind of action, we can truly say that it is valueless, and then the whole promise of our future becomes hopelessly negative.

It would not for a moment be fair to imply that there

have not been many outstanding men, even scholarly and devout men, who have taken this view of the meaning of death. A not unusual form of criticism, for instance, is such assertions as the following: "Neither for the immortality of the soul without a body, nor for the resurrection or new creation of a body for an immortal soul, shall we find to our hand any arguments (not depending on the acceptance of a special revelation) which can be said to make these doctrines even plausible in the face of the objections from the analogy of our own experience, and from the lack of any general cogent evidence in support of any alleged experience inconsistent with this."

Of course this writer is not entirely convincing because of the phrase he uses "not depending on the acceptance of a special revelation." We, who believe in the value of death, do accept and depend on a special revelation. We believe that, throughout the ages, in one way or another, God has told mankind that life is continuous, and that death is no more than an introduction to a fruitful experience of greater intensity than anything life can afford. We are not here, perhaps, to argue the question. We do not care to try to prove the fact of the continuity of life: for we assume that almost all intelligent men and women of today believe that the soul goes on in some form or another, and that death is an experience essential to the perfection of that soul's inheritance. The writer of the above quotation cites Shelley's wonderful lines:

"As music and splendour
"Survive not the lamp and the lute;
"When the lamp is shatter'd
"The light in the dust lies dead—
"When the cloud is scatter'd
"The rainbow's glory is shed.
"When the lute is broken,
"Sweet tones are remembered not:
"When the lips have spoken,
"Loved accents are soon forgot";

and goes on to say that, carrying the analogy a little farther, so it is with the body and the soul. When, therefore, the body dies the soul must cease to live. But, surely, there is a confusion here between what we may call subject and object. Music is not confined to the lute; even if the lute is broken the melodies it has brought into expression, the ineffable exaltation which the music has stirred, may be held in memory as among its most precious jewels. Music in its essence is not sound but the effect of sound upon the soul. Surely loved accents are not soon forgotten when the lips that have spoken are silent forever. It was not the breathing of a word that moved us to the depths; it was the power of love which the word expressed. And that power is with us as long as life remains, and, it may be, for the eternity that begins when this life ends. We cannot afford in the interest of our emotions to treat concrete manifestations of abstract things as equivalent to the abstract things themselves. That were to risk idolatry.

And so one would be led to the analogy of the connection between body and spirit. The body has certainly been the means of the spirit's expression, but it is not that expression; and the fact that the beautiful or the

good that men may do lives after them is proof enough that there is something in the power of a man's personality entirely detached from brain or lips or eyes or hands.

Nor, again, would death have any very evident value for us if it caused such a change in the life of the spirit as to make life here and life in the world beyond two separate existences instead of one continuous whole. There is a sad note which seems to whisper such a suggestion as this in "In Memoriam":—

"I wage not any feud with Death
"For changes wrought on form and face;
"No lower life that earth's embrace
"May breed with him can fright my faith.

"For this alone on Death I wreak
"The wrath that garners in my heart;
"He puts our lives so far apart
"We cannot hear each other speak."

To offset this possible dread any real belief in the theory of psychic manifestation and communication has, of course, overpowering persuasion. We do not believe that death "puts our lives so far apart we cannot hear each other speak." We do believe that death has not really separated our lives at all. It may have taken something that was visible, and placed the invisible essence around us in its stead; but it has not—we must assert—taken away the inherent power that lies in us as spiritual beings of bridging what little gap there is between these two lives and of keeping them still as united as in the days that have gone. At present (we say it

so often) we are but learning the way! It is difficult; it is hedged about with so many barriers of tradition and experience and authority that sometimes it seems closed to anything less powerful than a battering ram; but, we may be well assured, the science that is attempting to build that bridge is not spending its strength on any mere plaything, but is intimately approaching one of the great truths of all life. It moves slowly, but with growing conviction; hesitatingly, because the revelation it expects is so intense.

The thought of the continuity of life is, of course, the most necessary presupposition in any discussion of the value of life here or hereafter; and the thought of the continuity of life seems such an absolutely reasonable hypothesis. No argument can be drawn against it from the fact which is the source of most opposing arguments, that death causes a change—a change which seems to end those manifestations and expressions of the spirit to which we have always been accustomed. A river flows continuously past one point on the bank: the same water does not flow past that bank more than once, but the river goes on. Continuity does not mean the continuity of a certain sameness; it means the linking together of a series of expressions so similar and so joined to one another by all the power of cause and effect that they must be taken as evidence of one continuous identity. The beads that form a necklace are not continuous, but the thread which holds the beads together is; it lies behind, hidden beneath the beauty of diamond or pearl, but absolutely necessary that that beauty may be prop-

erly revealed. The jewels of action, such as they may have been, have, in the same way, a continuous thread upon which they hang. That thread we believe to be our immortal life. To quote Tennyson once more:—

> "My own dim life should teach me this,
> "That life shall live for evermore,
> "Else earth is darkness at the core,
> "And dust and ashes all there is."

Your own dim life teaches you that:—the unconscious, instinctive certainty that, behind all the struggle and the pain, the energy of endeavour and the meed of achievement, there is something that links past, present and future all in one; otherwise each action would be a new life—a thought intolerable and impossible!

If we assume, then, that life is continuous, marked every here and there by great experiences of birth or sickness or unconsciousness or sleep or death; and, if it is God's pleasure that we should know these experiences, it is not amiss to enquire wherein their value lies. And the value that is, perhaps, most necessary for us to recognize is that which comes at the end,—the summing up, as it were, of all these previous values in one great cataclysmic triumph, won by our steadfastness on the path that has been ordained for our feet to tread.

The supreme value of death, as we regard it from the standpoint of life, is that it rounds out that previous idea of incompleteness which has come into our thought before. What greater contentment can there be than to realize that the balance will one day be struck between all that has harassed and hurt and all that has encour-

aged and lifted up! What greater happiness than to realize that the instinctive longing for good, which is our natural prerogative, will not end in disappointment; and that we may set the eyes of faith and hope firmly on the state to come when, all restrictions of time and place and environment having been removed, we shall be free to work out to its perfect development what we know to be the best in ourselves? The tragedy in most of our lives is that we feel that we are worth so much more than the results would seem to indicate. We work so hard, and we love so passionately—and we are mistaken and disappointed; and yet, because we believe that good is unconquerable, we want to hope that that work and that love will one day be crowned with the diadem that fits their worth. It is not easy for you and me, perhaps, to realize what the hope of life could possibly be without some forecast of the value that death will bring. We cannot feel anything but pity for those to whom age is a precipice, remorselessly set before them, at the foot of which is Nothingness and Oblivion.

If we may believe not only our instinct but also the purport of many an after-death communication, death does bring about the most valuable lesson in the world, which results in perfect knowledge. Solomon prayed for a "wise and understanding heart," and God gave it to him as a privilege beyond price. But many a man or woman has been perplexed by the thought that the dead cannot really be happy in that knowledge, seeing that they must know all that we do and say and think on earth—and a great deal of what we do and say and think is not good. And yet the dead do seem, as far as we are

concerned, to be perfectly happy. They appear to make no criticism; they appear to have no feeling of resentment against us, or of disappointment in us. The only message that would seem to indicate anything of the sort is when the dead say that they are grieved for our sorrow. Many a spirit, though, perhaps, not those most fully advanced in all provinces of understanding, has cried that it cannot bear the thought that the ones it has left behind should grieve for it; and many a living person to whom some such message has come has immediately banished his grief in order that the loved one might not be pained. But it is only from our own human standpoint that we assume that sorrow is a bad thing. Jesus Christ was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," and His sorrow and His grief were elements in the fire by which the steel of His character was tried. We are not happy when a person is grieved; but we cannot say that that grief is doing that person evil. Good, after all, is positive, and evil is negative. Good is a great power of building up; evil a great capacity for tearing down. Our tears are often strengthening; they often fit us for higher aims and nobler aspirations; they often send us out more intense upon the work in hand: and the dead, it may be, know that, in the tears that are shed for them, there is something of that same great refining power which will make the mourner stronger in the future for his mourning.

It would not seem that the dead could eventually know anything but good, for our belief is that the next life is a great constructive period in which the spirit is turned slowly towards spiritual benefits and entirely away from

all that might do harm. The faces of the dead are set upon God; God is the positive aspect of everything—a thought we might make our own even in our daily living. They may not know very much good at the beginning; it may take careful training to guide their eyes away from earth and towards the realm of God, and, in that training, it is not unnatural that they would suffer from the lack of this positive sense. But, as time goes on, it must be that they know good in proportion as they achieve; and their achievement, being under the protection of the love of God, is a beautiful and a positive thing. The only happiness we know—even while we are on earth—comes from a sense of co-operation with the purpose of the will of God,—willing always constructively, willing always positively, willing always for the right.

If, then, there is value—positive value—in death, would it not seem a more reasonable attitude towards life to end it as soon as possible and hasten to reap these benefits, of the existence of which we are so certain? Most men and women before they reach middle age have probably felt a sincere wish to die; to be freed from all the many difficulties and inconsistencies that hem them in, to be safe and happy in the protection of something incomparably stronger and better than themselves, where no evil could possibly come within their horizon. There is to many people a glamour in the thought of death which sometimes grows so strong as to be almost unbearable. What would we not give for a knowledge of it all! for a sight of the tranquil, painless ocean of the love which we know exists, played upon by the sunshine

of God's favour, and splashed with the colour that the lives of all good men have lent it! There have been many instances of those to whom the glamour has been so impelling that they have ended their lives, and, in so doing, have lost for awhile the good that was waiting for them, because they have surrendered to a destructive impulse. We cannot, in loyalty, shirk life; we cannot refuse, of our own volition, to forego the lessons that only life can teach; we cannot be so cowardly as to run away from the imperfections and restrictions of everything that limits and cramps and stifles, when we know that by our patience we are tried. If death has its value, so has life,—and the two fit together to make one perfect reward. The dead who have spoken to us tell us about the threads they have woven on earth, of the associations that have brought them joy, of the friendships that have given them peace, of the tasks that have given them knowledge. No man may sing a requiem over himself; he must go on until the fitting day has come when others take that office for him, and he is occupied not so much in the things that went before as in the romance that is to come. It is not wise to flout the gift of life; we know not how necessary a discipline it may be, nor how it affects the "scheme of things entire."

Thus death takes on its most appealing guise. We find its value in the consummation of life. As we go forward we plant innumerable, and often inconspicuous, seeds, and very many we cannot watch as they grow to their fruition, for, in their growth, they are taken up and absorbed in the lives of others, not in our own; but to us, nevertheless, the great value of that seed-time lies

in the fact that it represented something in us which demanded expression, and by expression grew and developed. Christ said that "he that would save his soul would lose it, and he that would lose his soul for His sake would gain it." Those words can only mean that there is a wonderful access of power in the soul which gives its strength in Christian service—too great an access to be exhausted in this earthly life: where, then, will that power be garnered save in the life that is to be? If the soul in self sacrifice goes on growing there must come a time when it will outgrow all possible earthly opportunities, when it can find no field for its endeavour save in the illimitable expanse of love. The value of the life beyond becomes, then, not something we might liken to a reward given by an extraordinary and external judge, but the product of that great process of self-realization which has been instinctively the measure of our life. We must escape from this conception that there can be any good realizable for us except that which we ourselves are competent to consummate. The height of living, wherever that living may be, is not the regalia thrust upon us by an admiring company, but the satisfaction that comes from our own consciousness on the completion of a worthy task. The value of death is as the blossom of a rose; the shoot has struggled to produce that blossom, and to produce it of and by itself. So it is with the soul when it reaches maturity in the sight of God.

And so death has a discriminating function which is essential to the fruition of life. Those who have helped us to lift the fringe of the veil that hides this abiding

place tell us that they are full occupied in a congenial atmosphere of action. They work, each one, at the task for which their nature has proved most ready and competent. And, therefore, they accomplish the supreme measure of the good that in them lies, for their every effort is concentrated upon the cherished purpose of their spirits. It cannot be so in this world of earthly life, for we have not the perfect vision to distinguish necessary from unnecessary, material from immaterial. There is a medley of sounds in earth's chorus, not all harmonious or consonant. There is a riot of colours in earth's tapestry, not all perfectly blended. It is impossible for us to choose our separated part, and pursue it with undeviating fidelity to the end. Our efforts are sometimes diffused, oftentimes mistaken. I do that which properly is the province of another, and he does that which fitly, according to my ability, belongs to me. And, therefore, we fail to produce that consistent whole for which the spirit of creation longs.

The value of Death is that these conflicting necessities are stripped away. But a few remain—and those are the tasks which have a peculiar appeal to each individual. I shall no longer be occupied in those forms of activity in which I am not preeminenly competent, and in which my nature and my training have not harmoniously acquiesced. I shall do the work I love—the work that fulfills the need and ambition of my soul; and I shall leave to others the vast remainder of the works that are needed by the will of God, but such as others can accomplish better than I can. It will be wonderful to find myself a spiritual specialist, with all the realm of my speciality

spreading before me, and no conflicting or distracting interests to bid me pause.

I want to be true to the vocation that has called me. I will be true. I will find out what my Father's business is for me—what tiny contribution I can make to the sum of His perfect work. And then I shall make high endeavour, ungrudgingly, lovingly, to be no laggard servant, but good and faithful in the performance of my allotment. And I shall realize the greatness of the value of death which has liberated me from the bondage of much divided service, and set me free to give my whole-souled strength to that achievement for which God made me.

II

OUR THOUGHT OF DEATH

We heard a great deal, those four tragic war years, about the New Death. And the more we hear, provided it is sane and constructive and Christian in its appeal, the better it is for our living point of view. But it takes more than the written word, however beautiful that word may be, to grace the thought of death—that unhappy, ill-defined, paralyzing thought—with any wistfulness. Death is so old an experience for the human race that no trick of language can invest it with any glamour of novelty. As soon as we are born we are taught that we must die, as other men have died. There is nothing new about the truth of universal death: and the singularity of our own dying cannot be estimated until the time for its fulfillment has come and gone.

If we would profit at all from the thought of abstract Death it will only be by gazing into those waters which have closed upon the souls of the faithful, in such manner that we may see the reflection of our own death. Man is instinctively personal. The truths of all existence gain respect and credence from him only in so far as he finds them to apply to his own individual life. The philosopher, dealing with the mighty sweep of universals,

in so far as he is a philosopher is not a man but a mind. For the universals leave humanity cold—the humanity that trembles at the call of passion and emotion and instinct. He may comprehend the universals, but he can never understand them, until they are drawn within his body and soul—until, that is, they touch his naked personality. So it is with the thought of Death—easily formulated, credibly substantiated, rationally deduced: but never imbued with the slightest power of persuasion until made patent with the promise of our own death. The generalities of men are as the sands of the sea in number—but there is only one I.

It needs no philosophy to prove that the measure of any experience is merely what we think about it. And, if the event falls short of what we have expected, at least there has been the reality of anticipation. It is perfectly possible for us, as it is perfectly proper for us, to create our own thought of Death. We create our own thought of God. God is far greater than anything we can think; so, in all probability, is Death. Therefore let us be magnificent in our imaginings. Let us take whatever we have of the gift of jewelled vision, and clothe our death in something that is very beautiful and very perfect. It is not likely that our imagination will be cheated, for the power of imagination was bestowed by God for us to use. We can, if we will, make for ourselves a New Death in the spirit of Him Who made all things new.

And so we can bring, to help us at the end, a transforming alchemy. Aided by the radiant affection of those we love, who love us in return, strengthened by the tender solicitude of the Church, supported by the

promise of freedom and immortality, we crown our living with our thoughts of dying. There is between the two a subtle reciprocity. A splendid life must not go whimpering to its end. A sordid life can hardly know a triumphant, unfettered consummation. We think of our future as the fulfillment of our present. And, as we think, so in the main shall we be.

It is not unprofitable, therefore, to examine our thoughts of Death. They may be furtive but they are not insignificant. And perhaps they will hold less of silent terror if by expression they are exposed to the calm and reasonable light of day. Too long have they been associated with the despair of darkness, with the burden of a night that knows no dawning. There is proof unquestioned of the prevalence of this despair in the tones of many who have died with words of dreadful prophecy on their lips. Hobbes, on his death bed, is reported to have said "I am going to take a frightful leap into the Dark." Rabelais, brought up in the shadow of the Church, could look for no more than the certainty of a doubt, "Je m'en vais chercher un grand Peut-etre." There is no cheer in that poetry of Agnosticism with which our libraries are filled. Dryden wrote:

> "Death in itself is nothing; but we fear
> "To be we know not what, we know not where."

And Shakespeare, in "Measure for Measure":

> "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> "To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
> "This sensible warm emotion to become
> "A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit

"To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
"In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice,
"To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
"And blown with restless violence round about
"The pendent world."

And, of the moderns, Swinburne:

"Then star nor sun shall waken,
"Nor any change of light;
"Nor sound of waters shaken,
"Nor any sound or sight.
"Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
"Nor days nor things diurnal;
"Only the sleep eternal
"In an eternal night."

Even the Episcopal Burial Service in the Prayer Book, and many passages of the Bible, despite the spiritual comfort that underlies, are steeped in an atmosphere of foreboding. It is a distressing requiem to remember—"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

There is no sanction, after all, in the religious experience of mankind, in the clear message of divine revelation, or in modern spiritual thought, for this pessimistic and destructive point of view. If Christ taught nothing else, He did at least leave behind Him a message of joy for the future. "There shall be joy in Heaven." He did not, we feel most sure, wish anyone to be apprehensive about the life beyond, unless it might be that they were tortued in anticipation with a perfectly legitimate apprehension, due to the consciousness of their own wrong-doing. As the above quotations would seem to indicate, to many men death is an experience of horror. The only explanation can be that they fail to under-

stand the meaning of the spiritual life—the meaning which lies in our knowledge that the spirit of a man is God's direct gift to him of part of Himself, and that in that spirit there can be no room for pain or tragedy.

What is it that you and I fear when we think of dying, as everyone must think now and then? Is it that we lose certain things from which we derive pleasure—the sunshine, and the laughter, and the music, the companionship of friends, the exercise of mind or muscle, the sense of accomplishment, and the achievement that comes by living? Is it that we feel that the breach that is made by Death between us and those we have loved is an irreparable breach—something that can never be substantiated or rejoined again? Surely, all our Christian teaching points to the fact that the life to come is a time of re-union:

> **"What knitting severed friendships up**
> **"Where partings are no more!"**

Or is it that we shudder at the prospect of pain and the dreadful physical expressions and concomitants of Death? Is it perhaps that we are led to anticipate a period of great loneliness—the hardest lot which some companionable spirits can be made to face? Or is it perhaps due to something deeper and more fundamental still: that, being, as we are, so deeply imbued with a sense of our own individuality, and having, as we have, such a supreme self consciousness, we cannot bear the thought that anything should threaten that self consciousness with extinction? Self-preservation is looked

upon as one of the primal instincts of our nature. This self-preservation, perhaps, is an instinct that goes further down into the roots of our being than merely to concern itself with the preservation of life as we know it; it may be an instinct that grasps at any straw of help to guard and preserve that identity which, because it is ourselves, is the dearest and most intimate thing we have.

If these are our fears, we can rest assured that they are groundless. Accepting all the difficulties of our modern psychic belief, accepting the fact that there have been, in many investigated cases of communication, fraud and misunderstanding and illusion, yet a summary of the proved experiences that remain is convincing enough to satisfy anyone who maintains an open mind that such fears are unreasonable and unjustifiable. It is not that we need a new revelation from those who are yearning to speak with us from Beyond, because the revelation they endorse is contained in the essence of our Christian faith; but, in doubt or in unbelief, the voice of one we knew, speaking in the familiar accents of intimacy, is a substantiation that cannot be denied of the truth which the Master preached day in and day out, through those long three years, that there was nothing of fear in God's plan for humanity, save that fear which man brings upon himself by a knowledge of his alienation from the majesty of God.

Let us think of these prevalent fears more in detail. Perhaps the beauty of our thought of Death is obscured by our understanding that dying is painful. Even if this were true, which it is not in the majority of cases, such pain would be but a small price to pay for the hap-

piness that comes afterwards. Plato used to say that the only way we can recognize pleasure is by suffering antecedent pain. We, all of us, face the dentist with a certain dismay at the prospect of pain, but we are comforted by the thought that through that pain we shall be brought to a state of freedom from other pain. Doctors will, however, tell us, to our comfort, that in a large percentage of cases death is a very simple and natural and painless process: and, even if to the observer there appears to be a great deal of suffering, it is not always suffering of which the patient is consciously aware. Those who are in attendance when one is dying usually suffer far more in the intensity of their spiritual feeling that the sufferer does in a bodily sense. It is undoubtedly true that the pain of death in most cases is infinitely less than the pain of a mother at the birth of her child. The two miracles are wonderfully interrelated: in the one case the mother brings a new life into the world, and "as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world"; in the other it is also a new life that comes into being, but a life even more splendid in a way than the life of a babe, because it is a life grounded and moulded already by the influence of living.

The expectation of pain need not deter us from the happiness of the thought of Death. It will only be a struggle for a very short while before this delicate machinery, by which our bodily life is maintained, will be cast aside for something still more delicate, wonderfully

adapted for such an intensity of spiritual living as the mortal body can never know.

Is it the thought of loneliness that fills us with foreboding? Why should we expect to be lonely? There are few of us who have not friends—good friends, staunch friends, long-standing friends—gone on before. There is no reason to suppose their hearts have grown cold or hardened in forgetfulness. There are others, adept in the bestowal of tender greeting, appointed for the very purpose of welcoming to their new home those whose time has come to cross the bridge. There is God, all-loving and infinitely gentle, Who would not suffer the welcome to His House to be less than the welcome of a father to his children. It is true that we leave behind those whom we have known, but we leave them behind only in a bodily sense; we are not, it seems, removed from them spiritually. Because the great web of life is woven of spiritual threads, continuous through both worlds, though sometimes overlaid in this, there is no need for us to fear a complete separation. As long as we think physically, that is in terms of the physical life and of physical conceptions of locality and hours and days, so long will the state of death hide its true nature from us. We must train ourselves to remember that the life which is the continuing and abiding factor in us is not a physical thing, and that, therefore, the physical relationships are only so many accidents and episodes by the wayside—while the soul goes on its course unbroken and undeviating until it reaches the goal of its spiritual essence.

There is that other curiously intimate ground for dread

which affects some temperaments more poignantly than others. It is due to the feeling that Death means loss of individuality. There is something singularly distasteful and unworthy in the thought that the character a man has been at such pains to build up, which he has come to look upon as so essentially his own—the product of his own labour, of his sweat and of his tears—should in any sense of the term be lost, either by extinction or by absorption into some greater and more powerful entity. Although we are unable to define it, our individuality is the object of our most earnest solicitude. It is that for which we live at the same time as it is that by which we live. It is subject and object assumed under one term. It is inseparable from life, and yet it is the goal of life. As a sculptor who spends his years in the careful moulding of some marvelous statue, polishing it to the perfect point of symmetry, hopes that that statue will be his memorial throughout all generations—imperishable and wonderfully indicative of the genius of the man who made it—so we labour at the creation of our own selves, hoping instinctively that they, too, will refuse to become as the dusty creatures of a moment. The finish for which we have laboured in our lives must surely remain unblemished to the end of time: were it not so, that labour would be a mere waste of blood-stained effort—a galling mockery of the genius that seemed to make it possible.

With ourselves, as we have grown to be, to keep us company, the passing to the world beyond would prove no sudden break. We know ourselves, and with ourselves we are in good company. And there is nothing

in all the experience of the revelation of the life beyond that would make us suspect, even for a moment, that the character we made is not the character that we shall be. The doctrine of annihilation is fundamentally unreasonable, because it is one way of teaching that life is a purely waste space snatched from eternity; and we cannot believe that God is tolerant of any waste of the qualities He gave. The teaching of absorption is but little more tenable. It might very well be that it would prove acceptable on rationalistic grounds, but it is eternally defeated by this instinctive shrinking from the thought of the possibility of our losing our separateness in any other life, however magnificent or however infinite. Intuition is far stronger than reason. The part, taken as a part, has an individuality of its own; when it is assumed under the whole it ceases to have that individuality and becomes simply a contributing factor to an alien perfection. If God needed us to make Himself perfect He would surely have chosen some other way of allowing us to mould ourselves. There would have been a greater measure of direction; less self determination, less free will. However noble we may be as men, we are scarcely noble enough to enter into the majesty of God; and we would prefer to be ourselves—perhaps less perfect—than to lose ourselves in something which is not our own.

Those who believe that at death there comes the end are those who have been led astray by the analogy of the earthly body. If life exists only as the body permits it to exist, it is very easily conceivable that when that body ceases to manifest its existence the spirit within would

suffer the same dissolution; but, in order to be logical, we must then admit that during life any change in the body would of necessity mean a corresponding change in the soul. It would mean, for instance, that, as every part of the tissue that forms our physical body is entirely removed and replaced every few years, so must the tissue of our spirit be. It would mean that the loss of an arm or a leg or an eye would mean a corresponding diminution in the powers of the spirit. And that thought is as unchristian as it is humanly intolerable! The wonderful connection between the soul and body is most easily comprehended when we realize that, although the body does change completely during the course of a lifetime, yet the characteristics of the living person go on practically unchanged. This means that there must be behind the body a thread of continuity, which holds it together in its successive incarnations, and still makes the man we are the man we used to be.

And so, in our own thought of Death, it would not seem that there could be any room for apprehension of a loss of our individual existence. That we have been allowed to live as separated personalities here would seem to prove that there is something of value in that very separation of personality; and it would seem unthinkable that the same need would not exist in the dispensation of God for the life that is to be. If we were without interpreters the matter of our guess-work might make us pause in indecision; but we are not—and never shall be —without interpreters. From the experience of the person of Christ, from the words of many of those who still speak from the Unseen, we can derive so readily the com-

fort of the knowledge of the essential painlessness of death, of the eager company of those who welcome us, if perchance we might be lonely, and of the great certainty of an existence in which we are the same—at least in the beginning—as we have been here, with all the future of eternity in which to grow. There is no philosophy that is needed to make this certainty more certain; but, were it needed, there would be proof enough in the fact that life is not confined to physical reactions, as we know from dreams and the stirrings of our better selves, but implies a continuous development of the abstract qualities of God, given into the possession of men and women. If we could die, then we should be compelled to admit that God might die.

III

THE COMMUNION OF SOULS

It is safe to say that, in these days of critical enquiry into the axioms and presuppositions that underlie every development of thought, and that at the hands of men and women who are more fitted by education and interest than at any other period of the world's history to render an intelligent verdict, such a field as that provided by the logic assumed for the phenomena of psychic research cannot very long pass unchallenged. The time has gone when the fiat of authority, whether vested in an anthropomorphic God or a theomorphic ruler or savant, carries implicit credence. It must have been very simple to live in the ages when "Thus saith the Lord" had all the weight of a Constitutional Amendment added to the complete unanimity of Public Opinion. But life was probably a less interesting experiment than it is now. We are accustomed of late to test and analyze for ourselves. We frequently do so with very meagre qualifications in the shape of special knowledge, and very discouraging results in the measure of success; but the gain to our confidence in the dignity and value of human personality probably outweighs the disadvantages accruing from a disparity of aim and achievement. At any rate we are willing and anxious to continue the experiment.

The recent passion of popular interest in the study of psychic phenomena—particularly that aspect of the subject which has to do with the possibility of intercommunication between the spirits of those who have died and those who still remain in the flesh—burst upon the men and women of today with something of a shock. The comment has frequently been made that the years which preceded the Great War were years of universal materialism, when man's life came more and more generally to be regarded as consisting in the things which he had and not in the things which he might be. Hence the sense of contact with the next world, that sense which is the peculiar property of periods of great mysticism or great tragedy, had gradually become atrophied and anaemic. The critical, philosophic instincts of men had been directed along other channels—channels of materialistic science, practical political economy, the use and development of instruments and engines of transportation and manufacture, of warfare and destruction—and the great waters of spiritual and devotional speculation had remained undisturbed except by a chosen few. It was a sudden and searching call which caught many of us unprepared. To most men and women Incarnation has a more vivid appeal than Resurrection or Ascension, because Incarnation is here and now, while the future is the future.

We are willing, however, or most of us are willing, now that the call has come, to give the matter our most sincere and most thoughtful attention. We are faced with the possibility of the knowledge of a fulness of life which fifty years ago would have seemed incredible and fantas-

tic—the knowledge of a fulness of life which has taken the confines of two worlds and crumpled them up and tossed them away like a ball of paper. I aim to extend my knowledge beyond this world in which I live into the world in which They live, and I have a meed of work before me which I must do that I may be prepared. I must at least think over the premises, that, when experience gives me the key, the syllogism may not prove an unanswerable conundrum.

The obstacles that seem to bar the path of thought in this direction will, to any calm and consistent analyst, reduce themselves to three. These three are essentially difficulties of thought, of philosophy, if we may use the term in connection with that which is not at present an accepted hypothesis; and have nothing directly to do with practice. For the student sitting at his desk far removed from the stress of bereavement, and the sorrowful sighing of those who have lost contact, and are seeking a clue to find the bridge, the medium and the ouija board and the seance are unnecessary accretions. The student is concerned to know not how these things are done, but how these things can be. If there is anything in the vital force of the human power of reason the answer to the phenomena of the psychic world will live in the power of thought, tested perhaps by actual and practical manifestations, but originated and formed by the brain of man. The law of gravity was in Newton's mind before the famous apple fell; Columbus had an intuition of the existence of America before he made his plea to Ferdinand and Isabella. We, likewise, come to the revelations of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir

William Barrett, and their countless disciples, not as travellers on the edge of an unknown desert, but as prospectors with charts in our hands. We can know a great deal if we listen to the prompting of Reason.

The obstacles, then, that are to be briefly discussed are three—the nature of the communicating spirit; the question of space; and the question of time. It is not to be assumed that these three are exhaustive, but they are at least fundamental: and the enquirer who can come to a determination of them can, without great labour, prophesy the solution of what remains.

Most of us accept without any very serious question the truth of the psychological discovery of the existence of a subconscious mind. We believe this mind to be the repository and store-house—indestructible, unforgetful, infallible—of the impressions gathered in the course of life's experience by the objective mind. The objective mind takes its butterfly sips of knowledge here and there, and, before one bud is drained, it is off to the next. But none of the honey is lost. It becomes part of the store of the subconscious mind; and only in moments of trance, or dreams, or hypnosis, does it seem to rise to the level of consciousness. At all other times we assume that the objective mind is in entire and absolute control. But this assumption is probably only partially correct. Although we are not conscious of it, it seems likely that the subjective mind plays a very large part in the government of our lives. The sudden freaks of memory, the power of presentiment, the unanalyzed and unanalyzable impulse in a certain direction which very often runs counter to the dictates of reason—the whole play

and inter-play of the vast and mysterious reactions with which we are familiar in the course of our daily living—all those suggestions are probably in some way or another the product of our subjective self. In fact it seems impossible to explain them on any other hypothesis.

Now there is nothing unphilosophic in the supposition that these subjective minds are all essentially one and the same. As the Thing-in-Itself of the old philosophers, or the ether of the new, is the one irreducible minimum of material existence, by which all sensible phenomena are conditioned, and of which they are composed, so this mind, far more volatile and vital than any origin of phenomena of which we have any knowledge, must be the spiritual Thing-in-Itself, which the process of philosophic thought demands. If one day we discover that it is in no wise distinguishable from that ether which so far we confine to the medium of the things of sense, we should not be unduly astonished. In fact we should then be on the road to solve one of the greatest of all problems, the nature of the link that connects matter and mind, the link that asserts its existence every time we construe a sense perception in terms of thought. But, for the present enquiry, that precise definition is superfluous. All that is required now is that we should be willing to accept the conception that these subjective minds are essentially the same.

If that is so, then the most natural process conceivable is that they should have the power of direct communication one with another. And the evidence for the fact of what we call Telepathy is so strong that he would be a brave and lonely reasoner who would dare to publish his

denial of it. Is there any real shadow of doubt that the spirit of man has called and does call to the spirit of man, in its own inscrutable ways, amid the journeyings of this life? Are there any of us who have not had indications in our own experience that the longing or the wish or the will of another has had an unexpressed and unconscious influence upon something we have eventually said or done? At the time we did not know it. It was only by accident we found it out. But it is so reasonable that thus it should be. The very substance of which our true selves are made, why should it be bereft of the power to translate itself through the medium of that self same substance? Surely there must be a Communion of Souls on the earth. Surely we are isolated only by the restrictions of body and mortality.

And, if there be Communion of Souls on the earth by reason of the uniformity of the stuff of which those souls are made, what is to hinder that Communion among all souls universally and equally? There can be no *a priori* reason why the mere fact that the bodily instrument is discarded should hamper the expression of the subjective self. In fact the reasoning would point in the other direction. It would seem likely that the spirit would be more capable of self expression when divorced from the body than when wedded to it. It would seem likely that the spirits of those we term dead have a wider vista, a more generous horizon of expression, than they had in life. Logically they could still speak to us, to the subjective side of us; in fact the most natural supposition would be that they would find a way to speak to us. But communication is hard, on their side because the

truths of which they now have knowledge do not submit very readily, if at all, to human powers of expression, and consequently are unintelligible to those for whom they are intended; and on our side because the objective mind is so aggressive and ever present that it is only occasionally, under the stress of some abnormal condition of trance or the intense strain of great consecration or the genius of prayer, that the subjective self can assert its superiority. One can believe that they speak to us because it is the natural thing for them to do, deep still calling to deep, spirit free whispering to spirit imprisoned —but one can well believe that the half they have not told us, because, objectively hampered, the half we cannot understand.

Philosophically the conception of a spiritual Thing-in-Itself is no wild piece of guess work. The trend of all our thought is in the direction of the discovery of unity. Biologists search for it in the phenomena of life, chemists and physicists in the nature and character of atom and molecule, political economists in the structure of government and state. Why should we be behind-hand? If the spirit is one, then communication is inevitable; and, if the spirit is one, death is an episode and not a destiny.

The logic of thought, then, would seem to prove that it is more probable that there should be communication between spirits, whatever their state of existence in the terms of earthly life, than that such communication should in the nature of things be impossible, and the wealth of inspiration that such a conception brings is incalculable. Our faith, our mysticism, our whole under-

standing of religious economy, needs occasional revelation that it may keep pace with our measure of development in other avenues of enquiry. The teaching of psychic research we believe to be such a revelation, absolutely consonant with Christian belief, absolutely harmonious with Christian tradition. Those who maintain, as some recent writers maintain, that "a Christian cannot become a Spiritualist without renouncing his Christianity" know not what they say. The "Faith once delivered to the Saints" is indeed a glorious heritage, and never by word or deed to be denied; but it should not be assumed that all the "saints" lived within the confines of Judea. There are "saints" still receptive of the progressive oracles of God, within the bounds of our own modern world.

But those "saints" and their disciples will find the path of understanding burdened with thorns as long as they feel themselves compelled to accept the old unbending hyperboles, the materialistic terms, of ancient Christian thought. The formal rigours of time and place are a wearisome burden to carry, and bend men's backs so that perforce they keep their eyes upon the ground. We must rebel at the old formulas of "times and seasons," at the shortsighted superficiality which made nonsense of such truths as "Before Abraham was, I am," at the restrictions of "when" and "then" and "once". Further we must rebel at the spatial distinctions of heaven and earth. We must accept the truth, the philosophic necessity, of such promises as "Lo, I am with you always," and "Where I am there will ye be also," as indicating that the spirits of the departed are not removed from us

but are present with us; that, in the realm of God as in the sphere of thought, time and space have no absolute existence. We cannot do this as long as we retain the materialistic language of many parts of the Bible and scores of our hymns, without explaining to our hearers that such expressions as the "golden gates," "the distant city of God," "the courts of heaven," are the products of an effort of an unphilosophic writer to render his conception of glory and wonder and beauty in terms that would be universally understood. Jesus Christ spoke with the freedom of an Oriental to an audience of Orientals; He has been copied by those who are not Orientals, until much of the language of Religion has become a commonplace dictionary of materialistic terms, conveying in a large proportion of cases a wholly erroneous meaning.

Philosophically time plays but a purely utilitarian part in the system of existence. It is an arbitrary but useful means of measuring relationships. Even Kant granted it no more important a place than that of a hand maid of thought, a form in which our experiences correlated themselves so that their relative importance might be understood. Modern philosophers go even further than that, and construe time in terms of space. An event takes place before or after or simultaneously with another event. When we strive to picture such a relationship we instinctively use a mental image which is not that of time, but of space—a straight line, a dot for the first event, and another dot for the second event, placed either to the right or the left of the first, or, in cases of simultaneity, superimposed upon it. There can be no

absolute time if "a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday." There can be no absolute time if the sense of duration depends entirely upon our degree of absorption in the things that count. If we are interested in a task time is not a factor; if we are not interested it is essentially one. When we realize the full scope of the work of God we shall be interested as never before; and the necessity for the measurement of time will cease. A thousand years in our sight will be the degree of our concentration.

Therefore if we are convinced by the *a priori* reasoning of philosophy that communication between spirits is possible, the little puerile conception of time need not stand in our way. At best it is but a human and fallacious instrument. The spirits of the dead are with us now, whenever, in our faltering language, they chance to die. One of the great barriers between us and them is thought out of being if we realize that the absolute nature and existence of time is a figment of our practical approach to life.

It is not otherwise with space. Practically, with the coming of the aeroplane and the telephone and the wireless telegraph and the other rapid marvels of electricity, we are coming to discount the inhibition of space in the world of affairs. In the sphere of thought we annihilate it altogether. If I want to think of Australia, ten thousand miles away, or of the sun, nearly one hundred million miles away, as we measure such relationships, I no sooner approach the problem than it is solved. The evidence of Telepathy proves the non-existence of space as a barrier between minds. But, even if space were thought

to exist, it would betray itself into a *reductio ad absurdum* as soon as we attempted to measure the confines of the universe. The familiar child's problem still has weight; when you get to the end of everything there is, what lies beyond?

It is important that we make this conception our own or our difficulties in feeling the possibility of inter-communication between the spirits of the dead and the spirits of the living will be immeasurably increased. We are to such an extent at the mercy of the old methods of expression that we instinctively regard the passage of death as a passage to a remote and inaccessible realm: we think of those we have lost as very far away; instead of which they are with us. If space does not exist they are all pervading. We unconsciously assume that the spirit has left the body instead of what is far more likely to be true—that the body has been taken away from the spirit. There can be no here nor there on the dead level of spiritual existence, for space is essentially a physical conception, and we leave the realm of the physical when we discard the sphere of action and enter the realm of spirit.

This means that the spirit world is our true environment, not divided into continents or hemispheres or worlds, without distinction of A. D. or B. C. or the arbitrary space marks of the centuries, but stretching unbroken through the constant medium of life. Those whom we regard as passed away have not passed away, for the spirit is incapable of passing away since there is no space for it to traverse. It is even nearer us than ever before because it is freed at last from the physical

limitations of flesh and blood; and, being non-spatial, can exert its influence in a direct and immanent manner. That you and I are slow to appreciate that influence, slow to make contact with what is whispered to our subjective selves, is no argument against the existence of it. That slowness is due to the cramped nature of our development beneath the sway of the objective mind. We are so concerned with the body and the perceptions of the body—such amateurs in the art of freeing that imperishable part of us from the thralldom of sense—that those messages, which in their essence have to do with spiritual things, fall upon deaf understandings. It is not that communications do not come, but that we have as yet little or no ability to catch one thousandth part of the messages that do come. We shall have it one day. We shall so train our spiritual faculties that they will be in constant touch with the spirit world, and then, it may be, the destiny of man will be nearing its consummation.

In the light of any such view of the spirit existence the petty problems that exercise those who are only on the fringe of this great enquiry—and none of us have advanced more than a minute fraction of the way—are susceptible of answers which, though they be termed guesswork, have a definite philosophic value. Why are the alleged messages almost always so trivial in their nature? Firstly because the spirit, bereft of physical attributes, a body, a voice, a manner, is intensely absorbed in establishing its identity in the dull eyes of those with whom it is trying to communicate, and it is easier to establish identity by an intimate triviality than by the elaboration of a great issue: and secondly because

the spiritual knowledge it is gaining is too advanced, too specialized, for those with whom the earth is of necessity ever present. Why do the dead not help us more? They probably help us more than we are aware by keeping the spiritual side of us active and alert. They undoubtedly have methods of approach and influence about which we as yet know nothing. And it is also doubtful whether their initial knowledge is much greater than our own. How can they bear to see those they have left behind in distress or misery? No one has ever yet said that the life of the spirit is immediately a life of unalloyed happiness. It may be that the spirit suffers acutely at evidence of the sorrow of which it has been the cause, the misery for which it must be held accountable; but gradually it must be turned wholly in the direction of what is good and beautiful, and the knowledge of the sin and the suffering of the travellers of the flesh will sink into abeyance. They still remain in contact with subjective mind, but subjective mind only in the region of its beauty.

There are questions of vast importance outlined in the teaching of the psychic world, even as little defined as that teaching is at present. There are some to whom that teaching is incredible, if not immoral. Truly such have their reward; but they should wait a generation before giving their final verdict. There are others to whom the teaching is so different in form and content from any other teaching within their experience that, though they would gladly accept it as true, their mental processes are as yet unable to compass it. To such the philosophical background gives the solution. If they can

only be trained to think in terms of the abstract, the problems of the spirit will prove decipherable. There are others who both believe the new revelation and have the mental equipment wherewith to substantiate its truths to their own satisfaction. Such must be the leaders of the new movement. They must take the faith as it is revealed to them, a development of the traditional faith which they have always enjoyed, and must teach it and preach it and live by it. It is only one avenue of Christianity re-thought; it is in no sense contradictory to the Christianity that has always been; but, for power of life, for comfort in sorrow, for light in darkness, for good in evil, there is no avenue more potent or more vital.

IV

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The Apostles were not philosophers. They were not even truth seekers. They were spiritual empiricists, glowing with the warmth of a definite and glorious experience which their reason was utterly unable to trace to its source. They had occasionally made brief excursions in the direction of the explanation of things, as when they found their imagination exercised by the problem of times and seasons in the coming dispensation, and asked when these things should be; or by the question of precedence in the Kingdom of Heaven,—and made bid for portfolios in the cabinet. But the truth was too hard for them, as the truth has been too hard for every generation of men when there was no necessity to find the truth, and when the sun shone and the crops grew by the grace of heaven, and the reapers were too busy to wonder why or how. Plato was forced to enquire of the oracle of reason when the world he loved had gone to rack and ruin around him. Most truth seeking is guided by the rigour of force. And because the Apostles had no need to do more than live in the sunshine of a personality which supplied all that the spirit knew how to crave, they forgot that even goodness had an explanation and were content with the satisfaction of a feeling which knew no

cause. Jesus was training settlers in the Kingdom of God, not explorers.

And so many things upon which the doubting minds of the faithful have stumbled were never answered by the Man of Wisdom—questions of heredity, of parentage, of birth; questions of relationship and co-operation with other forces of Good; questions of divine power and divine control; questions of death and immortality and judgment. We cannot blame the Apostles. If Jesus Christ Himself were to conduct a course in Dogmatics at a modern seminary, it is probable that the anxious questions would be charmed from our lips by the grace of His presence. But in the study or in the chapel they all come back again.

If Peter and John and Nathanael had really been gifted with the philosophic genius, they would have found much to arrest them. Not only were they vitally associated with the reaction of a life on other lives, but they were chosen to be witnesses of a much more mysterious and intimate relationship—the reaction of a death on other lives. We assume that the dead live; and we bring every effort of our human understanding to bear on the examination of the proofs and evidence of their existence. Proofs and evidences are vouchsafed; gradually and tentatively we are crossing the misty borderland. Thought has come to our rescue, philosophy has guided our search; and we are beginning to understand something of that mystical communion which links the souls of those who have died. But as yet it is only thought, testing each step as it progresses, upon which we can fully rely. There have indeed been manifestations almost physical

in their nature, communications almost direct in their vigour and content; but they would be almost useless without our preconceived conviction that there is nothing intrinsically impossible in such a power of mediation. For this conviction we are indebted to the subtle genius of reason which tells us that communication is more probable than improbable. But we are waiting, anxious and eager, for the first unmistakable *a posteriori* proof. As yet we can hardly believe that such proof has crossed the threshold of our consciousness.

With the Apostles it was otherwise. They, of all men since human history began, held converse with the visible dead; and converse that could be construed without effort in terms of a life they knew. There was no need of imagination to correlate the differences. For them the gulf was spanned; and they saw that life in the world to come was but an extension of life in the world that is. The morning of the Resurrection found them ghost-worshippers, chasing a shadow to which their wishes had given semblance: the evening of the Resurrection left them fully enfranchised citizens of a new and definite kingdom. They had graduated from death to life: and, for a moment of eternity, the secret of all existence had been unfolded in their sight.

They were still empiricists. They still took the relationship at its momentary value, and, revelling in the sensation, put off the search for truth. All except Thomas. He, with philosophic doubt, measured the distance between all that he knew and the most that he could expect, and refused to be convinced. It was no mere obstinacy on his part. Doubters are among the

greatest promoters in the world of thought, because they demand proof. And proof is the ultimate weapon of conversion. Faith is no more than a refuge from unrest until it is seen that faith is justified. And then it becomes dynamic and effective. An obstinate man will listen to no more than proof of his own conviction; a consistent doubter has in him, by virtue of his capacity to doubt, the seed of an earnest proselyte.

Thomas was convinced by the appearance of our Lord's resurrected body. He could no longer doubt, after the measure of proof that was given to him, and maintain his reputation for sanity. His senses were his servants. By sight and touch he was guided to a deep realization. And, if he still wondered why or how, he kept his questionings to himself. There are some facts in the universe which, by their very immensity, stagger the power of reason itself.

Reading the account of his conversion nineteen hundred years after its occurrence, and linking it with the natural human longing to make the case of Christ's resurrected body throw light upon the future of our own, we are aware that we stand very much in his position. The words we use—the resurrection of the body—do they mean very much in the logic of reason? Body, to so many of the untutored and unskilled, is a thing of atoms and molecules, a combination of chemical substances thrown together by some divine alchemy in an earthly test-tube and wondrously fitted to do its appointed task. We make distinction between body and soul, body and spirit, body and life; and, in all these connections, body is the gross, material partner, which acts as receptacle

and vehicle and guardian for the more refined and delicate. We can analyze the body into its component elements—so many percentages of hydrogen and carbon and sulphur. Science can understand and account for their relationship and their reactions. But such elements are known to be perishable—or at least diffusable—and, in the event of what we call the death of the body, they perish or are diffused. There are a million proofs of that. The body of a martyr is exhumed, and his mortality has dwindled down to a handful of brittle bones; a man is struck by the force of an explosion and his body is scattered to the winds of heaven. There is nothing permanent, at least in the relationship of those elements that compose it. And, for that reason, and in that sense, the resurrected body is beyond the reach of understanding.

It may be only the unenlightened who hold this materialistic view, and are consequently tortured with this materialistic doubt. But the unenlightened form the larger part of the society we call Christendom. Therefore to the unenlightened some word of comfort must be said. If it is inconceivable that the elements of the earthly body reunite again to form the resurrected body, the resurrected body must be something of a different order. But that is a conception scarcely less difficult than the other. A body cannot both be and not be what we think any more than a line can be, in our estimation, both straight and crooked.

Let us review our terminology. What is the function of a body? It is to express the life that underlies it. In itself it is inert and unproductive; glowing with the radiance of a spirit it is active and effectual. It may be

a clumsy instrument, but it is a pre-ordained instrument. The spirit needs it for its manifestation, for the spirit must have expression in order that it may have life. When anything ceases to express itself that thing is dead; and life can never die. Therefore life must always have something through which it may make itself felt and known. And that something we call the body. When one is first trained in the science and development of thought one is taught to recognize the fact that the human brain cannot entertain an idea unless that idea is expressed in words or deeds or through the medium of a mental picture. We can never, for instance, think the idea "table." We have to think something about a table, or conjure up a vision or resemblance of a table. An idea without expression is unimaginable. So, it would seem, is life. And that conclusion, to which we are led by the genius of analogy, is borne out for us with all its implications by the test of experience.

The spirit of man, as conditioned by the needs and limitations of this world, has, then, been given expression in the form of the body which we know. It is entirely adequate. It is formed so that it may give the best possible service to the spirit that underlies. With head and arm it rears the cathedrals that point to Heaven, and paints the pictures that live forever. It construes the meaning of love and devotion and sacrifice. It is material because it has to work with material clay. It is unfitted for anything else. But it is not permanent and everlasting. The spirit uses it for awhile, chafing perhaps at the restrictions of what it calls time and place, and then casts it aside for another body—the body of

the Resurrection—the body which expresses the spirit in a world where earthly restrictions are unknown and unneeded.

We believe that, in that world, one personality reacts upon another. We believe that there are means for recognition and communication, something very different from the gross and awkward means we know at present, but equally effectual for our growth and development. What would be gained by an expressionless life, suppose such a thing were possible? The body will have become more nearly akin to the spirit, more purified and more elemental. There will be no further need of chemical substance and compound, for the world in which the spirit moves is no material world. But, in proportion as the physical manifestations of life have ceased, the spiritual manifestations take on a new meaning, and the body, adapted for every spiritual need, shares in the glory of the spiritual life.

Why, then, is it so hard for some to say that they believe in the resurrection of the body? Is it because the very term body suggests the material, the gross, the chemical, the earthy? Can we not point out to them that, as all flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds, so all bodies are not the same body, but there is one kind of body for the spirit in the next world; and, just as different concepts require different expression, so the bodies of the resurrected will be distinguishably different, but universally recognizable? Here our bodies disguise the substance of the spirit that lies within; beauty and love and sacrifice in

the character do not necessarily find a body to correspond: but there the glory of the soul will be self-evident, the body being the product of the spirit, as the sentence is the product of the thought. To say that we believe in the resurrection of the body is to say no more than that we believe in our manifestation in the future life as an individual entity, as a separate personality. It is the bulwark against the horror of absorption, the suggestion of annihilation: for modern experience has taught us that there is nothing so precious as the individual soul. And the possibility of losing that individuality is the most torturing possibility our minds can conceive.

We have spoken of recognition. We know that a host of friends awaits us on the other side, who will come to greet us as soon as we have crossed the threshold, some of whom are trying to greet us now if only we had fully developed the power to understand. Friends of all ages they are—childhood's friends, boyhood's friends, and the friends of old age. If our body were really in resurrection this jumble of flesh and bones that we wear on our death bed, how would those we have loved long since and lost awhile, those who have failed to keep in physical contact with us, know how transformingly the finger of time had acted upon it? That all of them—the friends of youth as well as the friends of age—may know us immediately for the companion of long ago, there must be something in that body which links us with all the periods and ages of our life. Our physical body does not. Our body changes and alters, and the man of three score and ten is not the man of one score and five in bodily shape. But in the spirit we are always potentially or actually

the same. And to eyes which can see, with the insight of the spirit, the measure of character and motive the one age is as recognizable as the other. At the moment of death we are the product of all our past stages of consciousness. Upon our personality the fears and joys and doubts and aspirations have had their cumulative effect, and we are the expression of all that we have ever been. Therefore our friends will find enough in us, at the moment of our passing, that is familiar to them to claim us as their own. We shall not be just the same as the man they knew; but we shall be unmistakably the same man. The guidance of the spiritual body will perhaps be more needed by us than by them. They have surely kept in touch with us as the developments of life made their changes. We have lost touch with them. It is comforting to know that we shall be able to know them, on the instant, as those we loved.

To bodily eyes the change is confusing. Mary Magdalene, when she came in the dawn to the sepulchre, and saw the stone moved away, and turned herself back, "saw Jesus standing. and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus, saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him. and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." She supposed Him to be the gardener. It was the early morning light, and the unexpected nature of the meeting? Not entirely. It was because the spirit, unchecked now by appearance of flesh and blood, was seen in its wholeness—the product

of all that it had ever been since the beginning of time, with the imprint of all these new and marvelous experiences. It was not impossible of recognition—but it was different. And that, we must remember, was to the eye of flesh, not the intuition of the spirit.

The Apostles, we said, were not philosophers. And perhaps it is just as well. It would have been an awesome thing to have stumbled inadvertently upon so vast and wonderful a secret as this—the secret which all science and all philosophy has been perfecting for so many years—the secret of the ultimate expression of life—the secret which science and philosophy will continue to perfect for generations to come. Though it may be philosophically intelligible that an idea must have expression; though it may be scientifically necessary that life must have manifestation; yet the further step—that life has the power of expressing itself to spirit without the aid of matter—is beyond reach of our human powers as yet. But its necessity we own every time we admit our belief in the resurrection of the body; and we leave it in the hands of God to substantiate our faith by the power of His revelation, as He has done so many times before, though it be when we have joined the great company of those who see with the vision of the spirit.

V

HEAVEN AND HELL

There are probably no two words in the whole history of language that, among the varied tongues of the nations, have so vividly fired the imagination of mankind as Heaven and Hell. There is lying in them the great appeal of the romance of the unknown—"the undiscovered country"—to which we are aware we are all journeying, in which we believe the measure of life will be consummated, and for which, as far as we can tell, the conditions of this life have been arranged.

It is perfectly natural that we should speculate about the meaning of these words, as Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans have all speculated in the ages that have gone. There can be no authority, however, except the authority of a personal revelation—a personal understanding of message and manifestation and suggestion from those who, because they have gone, stand nearer to the truth than we do. Guided by these, each man, according to the light that is in him, can write the charter of his own future; and it may be that for each man that charter will correspond to his imagining more nearly than he expects.

The existence of Heaven and Hell can be looked upon as a logical deduction from the circumstances of this

present life. We are in many cases so firmly impressed with our knowledge of its incompleteness; we start so many things that we have no time to finish; the promise of a great career is broken off before there is any appreciable fruit! What is the reasonable expectation? Browning speaks of the broken arcs of life which shall be moulded into the perfect round of eternity. The instinctive rational faculty of men permits them no escape from the acceptance of a Hereafter which must, at any rate in its beginning, carry out the promise of the present as a play bears out the suggestion of the prologue. And, in addition to this feeling of a necessary consequence of this life, there is a searching after justice, which seems to demand that the crooked places in destiny should be made straight and the rough places smooth, that the hills be levelled and the valleys raised. If there is hardship here from which it is impossible to escape, it cannot be that there shall be hardship forever; if there is sorrow here, it must be that one day God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. If there is no justice, then there is no God,—and perhaps the sooner annihilation comes the better it will be.

To the average unthinking man Heaven and Hell represent the state of the soul immediately after death. This conception is borne out by much of our popular Church terminology, and it is an acceptable thought because it is easier to visualize a complete and definite change at the moment of death than to seem to allow for a further period of training and development after the lesson of this life is ended. But there is apparently no sanction whatever for this idea of an immediate

change; in fact, the whole burden of proof seems to lie in the opposite direction. Natural life is an orderly and systematic process. It does not allow for abrupt and unexpected transformations. And the most natural life of all, which is the spiritual life, would seem, of necessity, likely to abide by this same dispensation. This would mean that, long before Heaven and Hell can become the inheritance of the soul, there is another state between death and resurrection, which is called in much of our Biblical language Hades. It is this intermediate state which, as the bodily restrictions have entirely been discarded, affords the perfect opportunity for growth and training in all things that have to do with the God-given spirit.

This intermediate state—the existence that is unseen, as the literal translation of the word Hades would imply —was certainly the conception of the more enlightened Jews. References to it are, also, found in many places in the New Testament; as, for instance, in St. Peter's account of the activities of our Lord's spirit after His crucifixion, and in the inner meaning of the parable of Dives and Lazarus (although in that connection the word "torment" is unfortunately emphasized); and in our Lord's own words to the penitent thief: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Paradise is not the same as Heaven. Paradise is the place of departed spirits, in which they still toil, and learn, and grow towards the fulness of the power that is in them. It is spoken of by many of the early Christian writers. For instance, to use the illustrations given by Arthur Chambers, in "Our Life After Death," Justin Martyr, A. D. 147, as-

serts that "Those who say that there is no resurrection, but that immediately after death their souls are taken up to Heaven, rather are not to be accounted either Christians or Jews." Tertullian, A. D. 200, states that "The souls of all men go to Hades until the resurrection; the souls of the just being in that place called 'the bosom of Abraham' or 'Paradise'"; and Augustine, A. D. 398, writes: "The time between death and final resurrection holds the soul in hidden receptacles according as each soul is meet for rest or punishment."

What, then, shall we say? Surely, every conclusion of logic, every natural deduction from the whole of our Christian heritage, would imply that there is a steady progress in ability, in consciousness, in learning, throughout the next state of existence, until finally the soul has worked out its destined consummation. For most of us this thought, if not new, is hardly sufficiently recognized. And yet its acceptance is fraught with the most inspiring consequences; for it means that the colour of our life continues into the Beyond; it means that the imprint we have made on the spirit of God in us is carried on with us when we go—to be our mark for good or for evil in the long cycles of growth that are to come; it means that our life in the intermediate state is the natural rounding out of what we promised and what we undertook here; and that life is one continuous span maintaining its long unbroken stretch like a line produced from an inch to infinity.

These things, of course, have been felt and said before, but never till the last few years have they had such a powerful endorsement as comes to them from the voices

of many of those whom the world calls dead. From all the books we have on after death communications, creditably authenticated, scientifically endorsed, it is possible to pick out passage after passage to depict for us an existence which is a continuation of this one in surroundings blessed with a wider freedom, with no final goal as yet attained, with no consciousness of great happiness or great misery, with certainly no sense of completion or consummation,—but with possibilities and potentialities that are infinite. Among such passages the following are typical:—

In Margaret Cameron's book, "The Seven Purposes," there are many detached phrases similar to that quoted, which purport to come from the lips of the dead:—"You'd like me better now. I don't mean that I am perfect, you know. I have got more to learn than I ever knew existed, but I can see ahead now; and you would like me better," and "You will begin farther along than I did. We shall go on together now for eternity since you know that I am with you, and especially as we live and work consciously together we shall grow together."

In the little book called "To Walk with God," by Mrs. Franklin K. Lane and Mrs. Blaine Beale, the communicator is speaking of life in the next world when he says, "Each must be a source of joy and comfort to all who are near them, and each must teach the other how to find his spiritual force, and all must do their work with their full strength, and all will be in this way co-partners with God, for then to do God's work is to be actually a partner of God. And when eventually man learns what part he has played in creation he will be very proud that he

was permitted the chance to do this work, for those who do this work are hastening the end that they desire to see come, and each will greet that force to which he belongs, and the end is much to be desired; and then will come the great pause when eternity will only have begun, and after this will come the joy and the morning when all darkness will disappear." And, "Love such as man knows is as nothing to what God knows for His children, and while He is waiting for the eternal work to be finished He is also working for man's glory and happiness, and all that is between man and God is his own desire for his own way. When man is once on the right path he will never be content with any lesser light, and all God can show him will be a guide to his feet on the way to eternal life and happiness."

The spirit who is speaking in "Claude's Second Book" says: "I frequently go now to the highest spheres for special instruction, for, as I told you a long time ago, I am being trained to be a teacher, and have already begun my work. I was chosen for this because I was peculiarly suited for it, and not because I was in any way better or even as good as many beautiful spirits here. The different spheres are different classes or forms in God's school; the pupils in the highest class learn a good deal from the Head Master Himself; they are sufficiently educated to appreciate and understand His teaching."

It is time for all of us who really desire that the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ should be an unqualified comfort and help to mankind to make what stand we can, privately and publicly, against the popular conception of Heaven and Hell. Theologically speaking, Heaven and

Hell stand at the end, after the Last Day; they are the result of what we call the Judgment. But the popular superstition still holds fast that Heaven—the place to which it is assumed a good person goes immediately on death—is something of a material state, in which activities that are almost physical in their essence occupy a very large part of existence. We sing in our hymn books lines which describe the future in terms of pleasure, in expressions of sensuous beauty, in language fit more for a spectacle of earthly triumph than for intimacy with God. Many of our teachings about Hell, which men and women of older generations have, in a similar spirit, taken as literally true, are so ghastly and so crude as to destroy all possible idea of a loving God. The following lines are from a sermon by the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D. D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, a man who lived no later than the middle of the last century, and had a tremendous influence upon the thought of his generation. They are quoted by Arthur Chambers. This is his description of Hell:—"Gather in one in your mind an assembly of all those men and women, whether in history or in fiction, from whom your memory most shrinks. Gather in your mind all that is most loathsome, most revolting . . .Conceive the fierce, fiery eyes of hate, spite, frenzied rage, ever fixed on thee, looking thee through and through with hate . . . Hear those yells of blaspheming, concentrated hate, as they echo through the lurid vault of Hell; everyone hating everyone . . . Yet a fixedness in that state in which the hardened malignant sinner dies, involves, without any further retribution of God, this endless

misery."

Such writing as this may have produced some moral results because men and women would be afraid—horribly afraid—to do wrong; but it must have failed to give anyone an understanding of the fact that what God values most in our lives is not so much freedom from evil as a great power of good. We have grown beyond the mere prohibitions of the Old Testament, and we have arrived at the positive teaching that sends us out to all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. If the power of good is there, the freedom from evil naturally follows as a matter of course.

But even with this understanding we are still far from any real conception of Heaven and Hell. Such states are so far removed from anything that the human mind can fully grasp that it is perhaps idle to speculate too intimately; but, at the same time, we do not lose by having a hope towards which we ever press onward; and the substance of our hope is that one day—after our discipline in the intermediate state has been entirely consummated—we shall achieve the final development of all the elements that have ever gone to make up our spiritual consciousness; that is to say, that one day we shall be the best that we ever could be, with the flame of God's spirit within us fanned to its fullest brightness, with the love that God's spirit gave us intensified to the last degree of sacrifice, and the knowledge that came from God sharpened in us to the point of perfect understanding.

That picture takes no account of the possibility of Hell as a final state. Can it be that there ever was a

soul so utterly depraved as to be incapable, under the gentle influence of the life into which we go, of showing forth anything that is good? Can we believe that God ever created a spark of His life so feeble that the cares and temptations of the world would crush it out entirely? It would seem that, to agree with our conception of God's purpose throughout the generations of mankind, there must be that in us which is indestructible for good, something in every soul—however depraved and however indifferent—which, were the physical and material influences that have hampered it stripped away, will blossom in its own small but perfect development. At any rate, we should like to think so. If this may be the case, that life that is coming will be the life in which only good is fostered, and evil and punishment are unknown. "There shall never be one lost good." It is surely inconceivable that there could ever be a life on this earth in the course of which there was nothing that was good,—no ray of tenderness or of human affection, no prompting after better and higher and more beautiful things, no consciousness of duty, and no loyalty to life.

This, however, does not imply that there may not be the elements of what we mean by Heaven and Hell very poignantly set before us in that intermediate life after death. It may be that the man who has tried to make of his life a dedication to good will be happy—happy in that unqualified sense which is part of our conception of Heaven; but even such a man would probably realize, thinking, as he must, over what has gone, that there were moments in his living when he did not evidence the fulness of the joy of God that was in him;

there must be what would seem regrets for opportunities wasted, for chances thrown away, for days scarred with the iron scratches of the lesser good. The whole genius of Christianity rests in our understanding that we are not here merely to do the good, but that our requirement of office is that we shall ever do the best. The vaunted middle ground of salvation is a slippery ledge between two precipices,—a slippery ledge upon which it is almost impossible to rest. Far better for us and for our fellow men and for our God to aim directly for the mountain-tops, even though we fall, than to be content with the easy, level path of dalliance in the plains! Jesus was the Saviour of the world because He took the world at its highest valuation. We can never help Him save the world until we do the same. There is, in our spiritual atmosphere, too much safety and too little adventure. And, if the intermediate state holds these regrets for the good man, what must be the anguish of the spirit of one who has lived a faulty life, and who is brought at last to a realization of all the good that he lost? In a minor way all of us have been through this hell; we know the feeling of shame and disgust that has flooded over us when we became conscious of something mean that we have done, of something that suffered so terribly in comparison with the good that might have been. If that shame and that disgust were intensified a thousand-fold, if we realized that we had never measured up to the fulness of our possible stature, the regret that would pour over us would be more disquieting and more agonizing than any physical punishment could ever be. In the intermediate life we are undoubtedly turned

away from evil, but that does not necessarily mean that we are not aware of the good that we have missed.

We shall go to Heaven. How our path will be ordered, through what vales of remorse it may lead us, we cannot tell. But there is that good in us, susceptible of the highest development in the training of the world to come, that will be strong enough to lift us up one day to a level with the sons of God. And those of us who are faint-hearted, and those of us who are tired, may well give grateful praise that He will take us under His own charge in the Beyond, and remove us from all these testing standards of heat and cold and food and money and health and work and play, so that we may live unfettered to grow as the spirit gives us power. It is something to have lived; but it is something far more to have died, and to be at last within reach of the Heaven of God.

VI

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME

It is, after all, on the life of the world to come that the focus of our daily living really depends. The sunshine of life as we know it throws a shadow of the life that we shall one day know; and, like so many shadows, there is a wealth of beauty in the colour and contour. Men have been found to assert that the conception of the Hereafter never plays, and never has played, any part in their estimation or judgment of the Present. If it has ever obtruded itself they have shut it away. But such men, if they were really sincere, were men in the intoxication of youth or the steadfastness of middle age, when death seemed, in the natural order of events, a long way off; and the claims of life were very insistent and very absorbing. As the evening draws on, even for such men there usually comes a change, when the question of annihilation or survival arises as a definite issue of happiness or horror. And according as they construe the riddle, so is the effect upon their direction of the remainder of their days.

For most of us, consciously or unconsciously, the genius of the life to come weaves a subtle influence. Even the most materialistic conceptions of Hell had their deterrent value; and the teaching of a nearer approach to

the happiness of God made instinctive a more real effort of sacrifice and service. As long as earthly preferment and ambition is construed in terms of reward, and earthly backsliding and omission in terms of punishment, so long will the conception of credit bestowed or withheld be one of the major chords in life's symphony. And the more intangible that conception of credit becomes, the more spiritual our approach to the judgment, so the more vitally will it affect the inner essence of our life. Such conscious recognition of its importance is a matter of daily manifestation. As to the unconscious appeal, there we come once more to the analysis of the subjective self. It cannot be denied that we have promptings that make for righteousness—promptings which we can explain on no rational hypothesis. We do not consciously think these things, or try to persuade ourselves of these things. But they come to us like the sunshine on a gloomy day. And, if we analyze them and all the phenomena which are closely linked with them—the manifestations of what is usually referred to as the power of conscience—we shall find that they are never without a forward pointing. They compel us instinctively to turn our eyes to the future, because they compel us to set our course of action in relation to an ideal course of action, and we see where the similarities or the differences lie. That man, by the unchecked use of his faculty of free will, may not always choose the less good, and thereby, by cumulative errors of judgment, drag the whole race down in the mire, God must reserve to Himself the right to suggest a direction for choice. He does this very delicately, so that in many cases we believe the impulse to be

our own. But on the fact that He does it at all depends the certainty of human salvation.

Philosophically there is great necessity for this assumption. Belief in some aspect or another of Creative Evolution has been widespread. This has been due, to a large extent, to the teaching of Bergson. But it even finds popular expression in such books as "Mr. Britling Sees It Through." Creative Evolution maintains that man is going forth on a strange and unpreconceived adventure, with the assistance of a God Who is adventuring with him, if not quite so blindly or so carelessly. There is no set goal towards which that adventure is directed; but the nature of the goal lies in the nature of the quest. By searching we are accomplishing; by living we are developing; by endeavouring we are formulating. It is a magnificent conception—magnificent, in its Christian application, in the great trust that it reposes in the essential worth of God's original gift to man. We are ready to make the supreme assumption that, if God is with us, we shall not go entirely off the track. The only shred of evidence for the truth of that assumption—for faith is not proof—is the fact that we are aware that we have not gone altogether off the track in the past. We can pragmatically assert that it is a glorious and helpful assumption, and therefore it is true. We can say a great many similar things, and bestow upon our powers of intuition a great many tributes. But, despite what we say, proof does not lie there. It does lie in the power of accomplishment of which this theory is the expression.

And, for one whose interest in the study of psychic phenomena is an intellectual and compelling interest, the

thought is no sooner propounded than it is accepted; for it depends on the same supposition which lies at the base of all such study—that the spirit before birth, during life, and after death, is pursuing an even and unbroken line of development. For those who hold that the episode we call death causes a radical change in the character of the spirit—tears out, so to speak, so many links, and passes in one moment of sudden transition over so many stages—the theory is negligible. Such thinkers have to fall back on the axiom of the miraculous power of God. But to those of us for whom the dying glide on in the peaceful tenor of their normal development, learning little by little knowledge that we can never learn in the body, but learning nothing which their souls, if free, had not always been potentially able to comprehend, to those of us the thought that the prize lies in the race, the reward in the act of virtue, the discovery in the effort of search, is a compelling thought. Life is an unbroken growth, and the life that is to be, the life of the world to come, is an integral part of the life that is. It is not too difficult a conception that all the life of which we are capable is in us now, but we have not as yet learned, and cannot learn in the body, how to make use of its fulness. Our spiritual development is a development of the intensity of living.

The Life of the World to come? It is not unnatural that the theologians of old should ask us to believe in that: for, whether they realized the implication or not, what they are desiring from us is no more than an admission that, with the powers given us by the grace of God and fostered by the loving care of God, we believe

that our store of life is sufficient to compass all existence. Which is an assumption we make and an admission we allow every day. No one of us really believes that there are secrets which, by their very nature, we are unable to comprehend. No one of us really accepts the doctrine of hidden things. We may admit that we are unable as yet to find the key; that there are mysteries which the limitations of the body keep, as it were, at a distance. But that we are essentially unable to rise to a knowledge of all there is to know—that surely would be a denial that we are made in the image of God.

It would be entirely legitimate and reasonable for us to wonder, in the face of this overwhelming interest in the life of the spirit, and the emphasis it most certainly bears on the question of eventual development and destiny, what were the exact part played in this development by life in the body. That is the life with which at present we are faced. The pains and disappointments, blessings and curses, ambitions and happinesses of mortal life are the most cogent experiences of which we have any knowledge. And we shrink from considering them merely useless by-products in the great process of spiritual growth. They must, we feel, have some essentially vital part to play. And that part cannot be only a measure of suppression, although the restricting nature of the bodily life forces itself always upon our consciousness. We long to be free, capable of doing so many more things than our body will afford the opportunity for essaying. Rupert Brooke expressed the desire in his own joyous, boyish way: "I want to walk a thousand miles, and write a thousand plays, and sing a thousand poems,

and drink a thousand pots of beer, and kiss a thousand girls, and—oh, a million things!" The well, the happy, and the strong feel acutely the limitations of the body. So also do the most spiritual.

But life in the body cannot be intended solely to teach the virtue of patience, although that aspect of it has been seized upon and dowered with a disproportionate emphasis by many schools of thought. There has always been a strong trend among the disciples of a certain type of Mysticism to force the body into a subordinate position so that the human spirit might be as free as possible to express itself. But the result has always been the discovery that the body cannot be suppressed beyond a certain degree without interfering with the activity of the spirit. That was the discovery of the most consistent Stoics; it has also been the discovery of all those who have watched the effect of the Hindu endeavour to work off the law of Karma—the law which states a theory of cause and effect by which every action generates fresh action, and must inevitably work itself out to the end, if not in this life then in another. "A Benares priest was once asked whether he had himself seen a man who had worked off his karma; and the answer was that such are exceedingly rare, but he had seen one in his youth. The holy man sat motionless, day and night, on the banks of the Ganges; he neither spoke nor moved. It was to be assumed that he had even ceased to think; for thought is a form of action, and generates fresh karma. His disciples washed him, and put food into his mouth at intervals; but he showed no consciousness of what was done. This is the ideal which is actually put forth by

the karma system." It is an ideal which has a larger vogue than perhaps we are aware.

That the training of Mysticism—the conscious endeavour to subordinate the body to the mind so that the spirit may enjoy the blessing of uninterrupted communion with God—is a valuable part of the discipline of life in the body there can be no reasonable doubt. It is a pity, perhaps, that more use is not made of it. But there is this fundamental difficulty. The spirit which really learns of God through the medium of genuine contemplation finds very usually an inhibition in its way when it goes on to construe the fruits of that contemplation into action. It is not that the body has grown weak or lazy; but the driving power of the will, having been subject to such earnest concentration in a direction away from the body, does not seem able to exert its full influence any more in the other direction. The mystic may be an adept in matters of advice, in the intimacies of spiritual counsel and consolation, but he does not carry out the practical matters of the law of God. There may be room in the world for a certain few whose province is that of advice and counsel and consolation. But their numbers must not be allowed to predominate, for fear lest the works of mercy and of charity, the works upon which the incarnate Son of God busied Himself for so large a part of His life, should fall into abeyance. For a student of God there inheres a difficult problem of proportion.

But there is another aspect of spiritual life for the teaching of which life in the body is most pre-eminently adapted; and that is the aspect of Sacramentalism. It

is a much misunderstood and much abused word. It has been taken away by force from its proper and legal connotation and has become associated with a certain type of formal worship which is distasteful to many. And yet the truth for which Sacramentalism stands is inherent in the very fabric of physical life.

It expresses our belief in the nobility of material things as being the medium for the conveyance of spiritual influences. There is a perilous tendency in many of our stereotyped phrases of devotion to depreciate the value of matter. Our vocabulary of religion is full of such words as "dross" and "clay" and "dust," which we use with a fine show of supercilious hauteur to denote the comparative lowliness of the material as compared with the spiritual. That matter is less to be considered than spirit admits of no possible denial; but that matter is essentially ignoble is a false corollary. Our Lord Himself bids us exalt the bodily attributes and all things connected with life on this earth. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit of God. What God has cleansed that we are to be careful not to call common or unclean. It is a sacramental act to build a cathedral and it is a sacramental act to cleanse our hands before eating. It was the genius of Sacramentalism that led Jesus Christ to touch the blind man's eyes with the clay which His spittle had made, to wash His disciples' feet, and to break the bread and to pour out the wine. So blind are the heirs of humanity! They think to themselves that body and spirit are distinct and separate entities. They forget that, in this life, the body is the expression of the spirit. They forget that its consecrating power makes

holy the acts of the body. And they forget that they are encompassed about by a cloud of spiritual influences driving through veins and nerves and sinews to accomplish the work of emancipation.

The true spirit of Sacramentalism finds its most perfect expression in those poets who saw in nature, in the streak of glory at the sunset's death, in the frail petals of a wild flower, in the remorseless ebb and flow of the ocean's tide, the vision of thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. Would that a greater number of us were vouchsafed the knowledge of that revelation! It would be so potent an influence in the direction of the realization of that God who is not separated nor aloof nor dissimilar, but Who makes use of material things for the inculcation of His spiritual lesson. Pantheism is vicious because it confuses the value of material and spiritual; Immanence is precious because it preserves the discrete proportion. An immanent God is essentially a sacramental God.

How God will speak to us in the life in the world to come we do not know. But we have every reason to believe that it will be, in the first slow stages of development, not in any immediate sense. We could hardly bear the direct revelation of His love in the untutored state bequeathed us by death. There must, it would seem, be something of a sacramental atmosphere shed around us at the first—a mediated knowledge of His presence and His beauty. Otherwise the transition would be too sudden for our spiritual powers to comprehend, and we should be like children lost in an unfamiliar world. The teaching of true Sacramentalism, which is the teach-

ing that God is making His influence felt through every kind of material or ethereal medium, is a teaching we need that we may be prepared to catch every whisper of His message. And that teaching reaches its height of power and effect in the life of the body.

It would seem to follow, then, that this life is necessary, in most cases, for the most complete development of which our spirits are capable. That some of us, children who die young, for instance, are spared the necessity of the great physical struggle, but still have our own part to play in the glorious school of God, we cannot reasonably doubt. It must be that they go on to attain development, seeing that they share in the priceless gift of immortality, and the gift of immortality without the possibility of attaining perfection would be a mockery. But no one can tell how that development is maintained and ordered. There must surely be a power of Sacramentalism, a meed of Mysticism, in the life of the world to come, through which they fight their way to a knowledge of God. It cannot be that they are deprived of the glory of the struggle altogether.

There is another way in which this life prepares us for the development of life in the spirit. This life is our first taste of an individual existence. We must have existed before; we must have existed always; it is not possible for us to leap suddenly into being, and then to continue indefinitely in that being. As we are immortal we must be immortal, so to speak, at both ends; and this bodily life is only one period bounded by what went before and what comes after. Or, more philosophically, this life cannot suddenly spring forth as a developed in-

tensity of spirit. It must be built on foundations that have always been; it must be produced by illimitable vibrations of the spirit. But, assuming that to be self-evident, this life still remains, so far as we can tell, that stage of development at which we first experience the fact of individuality. From the merged life of the race we come, dowered with a certain dynamic which distinguishes us from those about us; and for twenty, or forty, or three score years, that dynamic acts upon and is acted upon by the other forces of personality or environment which hem us in, with a certain subtle change to itself, and a corresponding change in those who know us. But the change in ourselves is always in the direction of the establishment of an individuality. The older we grow the more stereotyped we become. And, at the end of a long life, we are pre-eminently individual.

That individuality we take with us into the life to come. In fact that is the individuality which constitutes us in the life to come. To use our Lord's illustration, Dives is still Dives and Lazarus is still Lazarus. And, using the analogy of the life that is, it seems eminently reasonable that we shall go on developing as individuals, until we reach that highest stage, the consummation of all that to us is possible. There is dread in the doctrine of absorption, under whatever aspect we view it. Why should we devote all this sweat and labour, set our teeth in the face of pain and despair, carry about the overwhelming responsibility of our immortal soul, pray and fast and love and suffer, for the sake of the God given spirit, if that spirit is one day to be taken up into an overshadowing immensity? I shall be I to the end of all

things, more pronouncedly I as the flame of my spirit makes alchemy with the knowledge that comes to me and I take it unto myself increasingly and lovingly. What I need to strengthen my individuality is more knowledge; for all the things in heaven and earth exist to teach me of God. And the more I learn of God, the more do I rejoice to feel that I myself have the power to serve Him.

If one can credit the revelations and messages that have recently been given us from the world beyond there is evidenced a great desire on the part of the spirit to prove its identity to those who have been left behind. The small attributes of personality are eagerly sought for and communicated. There seems to be a sense of joy, of relief, at the discovery that Dives is still Dives and Lazarus still Lazarus. There seems to be particular work for each one to do, work for which he is most naturally fitted and adapted. There seems to be no danger of a dull and monotonous uniformity. We do not all go on to be moulded into one pattern. We are allowed to take the peculiar gifts that are ours and make use of them in our own peculiar way. The poet is a poet still, and the leader of men is a leader of souls. Our place waits for us; and no one but ourselves can fill it.

If that life is this life written large, then this life must be that life written small. And, as we come to live the one, so shall we come to live the other. It is the same life under different conditions, conditions which grow more helpful and more high as we go on. But there are certain possibly elementary lessons which we must learn through force of necessity; and to teach those lessons

is the province of the body. It is no inglorious thing; it is an instrument of God. It is a perfect thing; but it does not anticipate its own perfection. It wrestles very earnestly and very devotedly. It hands on to the imperishable soul the treasures that it has wrested from the secret places of physical life; and, with the treasures, the spirit is enriched for its fellowship with God. There is wisdom in the body; there is strength and there is good. But they are not things existing for themselves. They are here to train and mould the spirit, which is the master, that it may be fit and refreshed for the life of the world to come. It does its part to make us worthy individuals—and leaves the rest for ourselves and God.

Gradually the spirits that have passed beyond seem to be turned wholly from evil to the contemplation and the knowledge of good. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." In the light of the recent revelations those words seem to be immeasurably true.

VII

THE DEATH OF JESUS

As an event free from all theological and metaphysical implications, such as the meaning and value of theories of Reconciliation, Redemption, and Atonement, the death of Jesus remains for all mankind the one indisputable piece of evidence upon which we base our conclusions as to the future destiny of the human soul. In Jesus the whole career of a man was, as it were, foreshortened. Life, death, survival, and resurrection were passed by Him as milestones upon a short and finite journey, the better for our understanding that the same milestones will be one by one uncovered by us on that longer path which stretches before us through eternity. In Him all life reached a focus; and a focus is small and easily discernible. Therefore in Him we see the destiny that means so much to us foreshadowed and complete.

The actual facts are matters of history. At about nine o'clock on the morning of Friday, April 7th, A. D. 30, (to accept the conclusions of scholars most usually endorsed) Jesus was crucified. By three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day He was dead. Despite the assertions of those who try to prove that He merely swooned upon the Cross, and that He was unconscious and not dead, when His body was removed, every par-

ticle of real evidence, including the evidence of our own intuition which convinces us that Jesus would not have ended His teaching of truth with a lie, points to the certainty that He died as other men die, and that His lifeless body was taken by His friends, and placed in the new rock-cut tomb in the adjacent cemetery. There presumably it rested throughout Saturday, while the spirit of its Master went about its business in the spirit world. On Sunday He rose again; and upon that rising again the belief of the early Church was founded. He could not have risen had He not died. And so, through the death of Jesus, the power of His life was manifested.

There are some who say that, although these facts may be taken for granted as being undoubtedly true in the case of Jesus, they prove nothing in respect to ourselves or our future because, very patently, we are not as Jesus was. He could walk upon the surface of the waves; He could provide a starving multitude with food from a hopelessly inadequate store: we cannot. Therefore we are not comparable with Him. And so, it has been argued, the circumstances of His death can teach us nothing about our death. For He was God, and we are men. But this line of argument, carried out to its logical conclusion, will render valueless the bearing of the whole life of Jesus upon the lives of men and women. If He was so different from us as to represent another order of existence, His mission from the beginning was destined to failure, and the Incarnation loses its meaning. Jesus Christ became man in order that He might construe for us the will of God under human conditions. For that purpose He was made a perfect man; and our

actual frailty is no argument against our potential perfection—never, of course, consummated to the same degree as in the case of Jesus, but never made wholly impossible because of a fundamental difference in kind.

As has been pointed out by recent authors, there appear to have existed in the time of Christ four theories of the future life, widely prevalent among the Jews. The first was that of the Sadducees, who denied that there was any conscious existence of the soul after death or any resurrection; the second, that of the Pharisees, who held that there was no conscious existence of the soul after death, but that there was a resurrection to a new life in the body on earth: the third, held by many of the Hellenists, that there was a conscious existence of the disembodied soul, but no resurrection; and the fourth, held by others of the Hellenists, that there was a conscious existence of the disembodied soul, followed by a resurrection on the last day. "These four theories struggled with one another for supremacy, no consensus of opinion was reached, and many Jews remained sceptical on the whole subject. A new revelation was needed to clarify thought. Fresh light must be thrown on the nature of God, the nature of man, and their relation to one another, before the problem of immortality could be solved. But light came in Him, through Whose life, and teaching, and rising again from the dead, life and immortality have been brought to light."

These sane words from a book by Lewis Bayles Paton, D. D., of Hartford Theological Seminary give an answer to one of the long standing questions that have exercised the faith of countless believers—Why was it necessary

for Christ to die? In our desire to keep our vision of Him unsullied by anything that might stain or pollute, some of us wish to imagine Him as free from the pain and dreadful physical concomitants of death. So many of the deaths we witness are scenes of great distress. The body appears, for a while, at its very worst, almost as a means of degradation. Could not the beloved body of the Lord have been spared that debasement? Of course it could. Jesus might have been taken up to heaven like Elijah, in a chariot of fire. He might have disappeared from the earth like St. John, and thereby have accentuated among His followers the dignity that inheres in mystery. But, once again, to have done so would have been to defeat the purpose of His life. He was striving so hard to show us that He was like us and not different from us. His labour, throughout, was not to exaggerate His divinity but to magnify His humanity, in order that through Him we might come to understand the purpose of God in man.

For that reason His death upon the Cross was in keeping with His whole teaching of the power of service. He who would rule must serve. He knelt down and washed the dusty feet of His disciples, implying that He had given them an example, that they should do as He had done to them. He could have ruled them dogmatically, arbitrarily. He preferred instead to wash their feet, because they would have to wash each other's feet in obedience to the law of humility. He could not appear to be any better than they were. And so He could not suffer a death which was any easier than the worst which might befall some of them. If He had chosen

anything but the extreme pain and shame of the Cross He could never have called upon any disciple of His to face the cross without knowing that they might think He had called them to follow where He Himself was afraid to tread. That would have meant that He had failed in His gift of love.

And so, because He might have need to summon us to face the cross for Him, He was content to face the Cross for us, knowing that in time we should look beyond the cross to the glory of which it was the threshold. He knew that, to those who regarded the Cross as the end, His life would have closed in the darkness of ignominious failure. He was prepared to hazard that appearance of failure because He trusted that the resurrection would prove that He had triumphed, and that His rule of life was true: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross; therefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

To the eye of faith, such faith as existed in the early Church, and still exists widespread through Christendom today, the meaning of the parable of the Cross is clear. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies

through His Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is impossible for the death of Jesus to have any meaning apart from its bearing upon the interpretation of the nature and development of His love in our life and through our death. From any other standpoint it becomes merely a pre-eminent instance of the vindictive spite of men, of the jealousy and cruelty of human prerogatives, and the intolerance and ingratitude of a selfish world. But, as it was necessary for our sakes, its bitterness passes into glory.

It was inevitable, of course, that the dim shapes that passed by Calvary in the twilight of that first Good Friday morning should see in the tortured figures of the crucified but the emblems of triumphant justice and human failure. There was nothing in them to speak of conquest over the world of sin and death. It would have required a greater power of imagination than is the accepted lot of man, to see, even in Jesus, with the full remembrance of all that He had said and all that He had been, anything but a criminal brought to a criminal's accounting. Imagination is one of the most needed qualities in all the spiritual life. God does not speak unequivocally; we must read His message between the lines of manifold revelations. The meaning of life is far from clear, even to the most sophisticated. The meaning of service and charity and unselfishness and salvation is obscured by too many of the methods of practical application. The meaning of death is too often swallowed up in the despair of personal loss and separation. If those who loved Him were so far from seeing, with the genius of imagination, the true passing of the spirit of

Jesus that they ran away and left Him to inaugurate His triumph practically alone, there is little wonder that we, with nothing but the dreariness of the grave to guide us, should hesitate, unnerved, upon its brink, while the earth rattles remorselessly upon the casket of our hopes.

We have come, most of us, through the pressure of the ages of belief, to give credence to the fact that Jesus lived in power after the shadows of Calvary had rolled away. But many of us, even today, cannot apply the analogy to our own dead. They live: yes. We admit that they live. But our vision is bound by the sombre belief that it is at best an eventless and apathetic life. "Can the dead praise Thee?" The complaint is implicit in our mourning. We deny them, in our sorrowing thought, the noble vitality of ambition and emotion, the satisfaction of duty done and progress achieved, the dynamic touch of the breath of truth and loveliness and ineffable good. When Jesus, serenely removed from all the shafts of earthly distress, is graciously occupied in the sublime tasks of the spirit, why should we call Him unique, a power apart, the heir to life separated and distinct; and reject Him as the prototype of ourselves? God knows we are wrong, but God knows we are human.

If, after these centuries of patience, He has allowed our longing to a certain extent to be answered, and a certain few to break through the shroud of silence that envelops the future state, it was only to be expected, seeing that it was according to His plan that Jesus should show the way. If communications come it is no more than we should naturally forecast, seeing that we are following in His every foot-print. If Calvary had been

all—and no voice or visible semblance or living expression of love had burst out of the stillness, it would have been incredible that the spirits of other men should have found the way: it is incredible that God should have allowed them to find the way. But, because the life of Jesus was manifest from beyond His death, we might have felt the assurance that our loved ones too would manifest their lives as conscious, waking glories. That they have done so, and are doing so, and will increasingly continue to do so, is now no longer a matter of faithful expectancy and serious conjecture. It is becoming, to the eager of the world, a proved and certain fact. And the certainty of it, quite apart from all that modern science has revealed, would rest most surely on the knowledge that, because Jesus held converse with men after He died, so shall men also hold converse with men after they are dead. What did Jesus come, in His human shape, to show but that, as He was, so shall we be, and as He rose again, so shall we rise? It were better to say, not that He rose again, but that He continued to live in active service—and so shall we! "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

It is difficult to understand, therefore, why those who oppose the acceptance of the modern revelations of after death communications (when such communications have been so scientifically investigated as to make mistake and fraud impossible) assert that the teaching of psychic research is contrary to the teaching of Christianity, and derogatory to the memory of Christ. If this teaching

were contrary to the teaching of Christianity and derogatory to the memory of Christ it is safe to say that many of those who now accept it would shun it as a meretricious and deadly cult. But there is nothing in the facts of the case to warrant this attitude. Rather is the opposite true—that the findings of psychic research, in their sane and reverent form, support the whole revelation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and make that death and resurrection more amazingly potent to our understanding by linking it with the actual destiny of those whom we have known and loved. It is not too much to say that it is conceivable that the study of psychic phenomena will be found to be of immense value as an instrument of conversion. For, when men are fully assured that their own dead continue alive, they will have no choice but to renounce the scepticism that characterizes many of them—professing Christians though they are—in relation to the whole story of Jesus' resurrection, and to accept the good tidings of His future life as the natural and inevitable deduction from the spirit of His earthly life. Our dead are witnesses of Him—of His truth and of His beauty. And men will come to Him through them.

There is another question of the future closely allied to that of the immediate continuity of life manifested to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that is the question of His Second Advent. It has always fired the imagination of speculative men. In the Church of the earlier centuries it was perhaps the most pressing consideration of all, and the one which most vitally affected the conduct of life among those who understood the

refinements of the Christian hope and the substance of the Christian promise. Jesus would come again. It might be next week or next year; it might be today or tomorrow. And when Jesus came again, a balance would be struck between the evil and the good, and the centuries of divine rule and dispensation would be unrolled in all their majesty. Therefore, while there was still time, it was prudent for the believer to set his house in order and make what haste he could. There was no time to waste on idle amusements, even on the practical necessities of the workaday life. What was the use of planning a career or amassing a fortune or arranging the economy of the future when, at any moment, the summons to be done with earthly things might sound, and the whole structure of physical life fall to the ground? It was under the stress of this conception of the imminence of the Second Coming that men forsook the world, and hid themselves in the holes and corners of the desert or mountain that they might wrestle with the problem of spiritual salvation. The result was that the Church produced saints and martyrs in greater numbers than at any other period of her history. Men could afford to die with serenity, even in the arena, because death could but forestall a destiny which was inevitable, in any case, within a short period. It were absurd to be niggardly about an affair of a few brief hours or weeks. Therefore it were no hardship to die, especially when death for the Faith insured a corresponding reward when He came.

There are many groups of Christians of today, not necessarily confined to the ranks of professing Adventists or Premillenialists, who hold the same view as to the

sudden and catastrophic nature of the Second Coming. Their vista has, of course, been lengthened. It will not be today or tomorrow; it may not be in our generation, although the war seemed perhaps to be the first sign of the utter worthlessness and depravity of the world and the consequent nearness of its Saviour. The hearts of such believers are naturally despondent. Jesus will come to judge the world when the world has shown that, under its own guidance, it cannot establish its freedom. Things are going from bad to worse all the time. Revelation breaks down, divine institutions under human management break down, morals break down, religion breaks down: and the only possible remedy is the intervention of Almighty God to save His handiwork from utter ruin. The task that lies before us as individuals is to cleave as close to the truth as we can, to induce other individuals to do the same, and to let the great ungainly mass of the world go on creaking to its destruction until such time as God sees fit to intervene. Then the Judgment—and punishment or reward.

In opposition to this view is the more normal and hopeful conception of the average Christian. The world is not really growing worse, although it suffers many a setback in its upward course. To assume that it were would be to assume that God's purpose in the world had failed. But, as a matter of fact, mankind has progressed in every department of life in the last five thousand years; and there is no reason to suppose that that progress will not continue until the powers of the human race have reached their fruition. This view may be taken as typical of modern scientific thought. It is expressed by many writers.

Professor Stein of Bern, for instance, says "The veil is gradually lifting from the meaning of history. The meaning is and can be nothing else than the progressive ennobling of the human type, the upbuilding of the human species into social persons, the final subjugation of the 'bête humaine' through social institutions in the realm of law and custom, of religion and morality, of art and science." And another writer, after maintaining that "it is not too much to say that our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom, and the social environment as a whole, in relation to our possibilities and our claims, is the worst that the world has ever seen," goes on to conclude that "the well-established laws of evolution as they really apply to mankind are all favourable to the advance of true civilization and of morality."

The death of Jesus was not illogical nor catastrophic. It was the perfectly natural and inevitable conclusion of His life and teaching. He did not proceed by wresting the laws of nature from their context, but by allowing them to develop normally and relentlessly. If nature abhors a vacuum. so does human nature abhor chaos. It would find no use for a God who failed to be an orderly God. And so it resents the doctrine of a sudden and drastic intervention. We build our life on the assumption that that life, in ourselves and others, will pursue a gradual and systematic course—not from good to evil, for that would deny the inherent righteousness of the power of God, but from good to better, which would substantiate the claim of God to be the God of love.

Jesus lives, and one day He will assert His sovereignty over all flesh.

When will that be? We can answer as we please: but the logic of the spirit would tell us that it will be in those far off generations when mankind has universally learned the letter and the practice of His teaching. As yet we are only at the beginning, literally children of the ages. It has taken two thousand years to make His genius understood by the few; it may take millions of years before it is understood by the many. But there is no cause for haste. We have all eternity before us. Let us test each step as we go, and establish the foundations before we build the temple.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." There will, it seems, be a generation living on the earth in the fulness of the Christian life. For them there will be a change: but it will hardly be a perceptible change, for they will be ready to enter into the life of God without altering their practices or their belief. And, by that time, those who have gone before will, in the training ground of the Beyond, have brought their lesson to its fulfillment, and will themselves be ready to accept their everlasting destiny. In the meantime they are at work in the spirit world, as Jesus was at work in the spirit world after His release. And we are grateful to them for telling us something of how they fare in happiness and vitality and promise, even as Jesus told us something of what the life in the hereafter represented. We cannot separate their destiny and His. For God sent his Son that mankind might see in Him, in all His universal bearing, a revelation of themselves.

VIII

WANTED—AN ORTHODOXY OF THE PSYCHIC

Perhaps, by a large number of people, it is not wanted. Perhaps the subtle taste of the mass would take the misty borderland on trust, and feel that chart and compass were as out of place as a chemical analysis of the Body and Blood at a Confirmation class. But it is chiefly the young to whom the spice of adventure lies in the fact that it harbours an Unknown. The older we grow the more we demand of certainty. We like a plan for our work and our play, a pre-arranged programme for routine and vacation. And so it cheers us to know what looms before us in the spaces that lie between action and fruition. We shall die, as other men have died. We shall go on to consummation. And we know that the path recently has been trodden by the feet of so many untimely millions. In what they know we feel we ought to share. We shared everything else with them, and were not prepared for this so sudden severance. It makes an incompleteness in our life.

As Christians we turn to the Church of Christ for enlightenment. Is there no one who, speaking with the authorized inspiration of the Holy Spirit invoked upon them by the will of all good men and the specific blessings of Christendom—is there no one who will tell us

what, in all this welter of suggestion, we may seize upon as true, as facts which we may teach our people who come to us in all the agony of untutored longing? The scientists have not kept silence; the psychical investigators have not held their peace; even the unskilled among the great fraternity of the bereaved have sung their song of consolation. Only the Church keeps its lips closed. And it is time that, by some far seeing leader of the Church—who also himself has felt the sting of loss—a definite message should be given. Can the dead hear? Can we hear the dead? What is our Christian belief? How can we foreshadow the belief of our children who are to come?

The word Dogma is an uncomfortable word. It suggests such terrifying certainties as that an adjective agrees with its noun in gender, number, and case, as enunciated in the italicized introduction to the old Latin Grammar. And yet no one would gainsay its worth. Without dogma the world would be a chaos—the very glorification of opportunism. We can do what we like provided we do it along certain defined lines. That is Free Will. We can think what we like provided we do not think contradictions. That is Logic. And the rules of Logic are the dogmas of faith. This must necessarily be so, for, as one recent writer expresses it, "dogmas are simply masses of petrified or embalmed experience:" and, as no one has ever experienced a contradiction, our dogmas must be equally free from such vicious accidents. We need dogmas to give our experience form and stability, as we need the rules of syntax to give our expressions intelligibility and coherence.

The trend of all serious literature written since the war has been to emphasize the consummate importance of personal experience. All the traditions that used, by leave of our shortsightedness, to hold up their tinselled heads as dogmas, were thrown into the melting pot, and noisily simmered down to a sediment of class fashions or social conventions or national prerogatives, or came out purified and uplifted. Personal experience took every idol of the world, and applied the touchstone of a rigid pragmatic examination. The ones that survived were enshrined once more as dogmas on a sure and lasting pedestal—the rest were left to the sport of Bolshevists and fakirs. And out of the struggle came the wonderful, new light of human love shed round the old, old truths that the blood and sweat of centuries had consecrated—and we had almost forgotten. We learned once more that Personality is the measure of human life, that Incarnation is true, that Resurrection is true, that Loyalty and Honor and Self-sacrifice and Courage are in truth treasures beyond all price, that the Holy Spirit is alive in the hearts of men, and that the love of God for the men and women He trusted has not grown cold.

But these dogmas all ante-dated the war. In fact many of them ante-dated Christianity. They were no new discoveries. All that the smoke of battle did for them was to set them up by contrast in a clearer atmosphere, and bring again the glories that time had dimmed. It is not so with the truths of scientific spiritualistic research. They burst fresh upon the consciousness of the rank and file of the world. They were a new revelation.

Spiritualism is a misleading term. It has been used so often for what is superstitious and meretricious that the average man hears it with impatience. To us it should be nothing tawdry and base, but a sane and reverent appreciation of the truths of the spirit world. It should disclaim all official connection with the feats of giggling girls round a ouija board or a drawing room table; it should never be thought of as primarily linked with the darkened room or the morbid excitement of a hysterical seance. Ghost stories are not part of its message, nor the light and careless hands of the curiosity seekers part of its setting. The study of the spirit world is as much a matter of prayer and preparation as the study of the sacramental world—that great sphere in which things that we can touch and see speak to us of verities that lie in the heart of God. And to this study many a man of poise and dignity has given the consecrated attention that is its due. It is to those men that we owe our leadership; and we are lacking in breadth if we refuse to heed their words.

To the number of academic and expert investigators must be added another host, less practised, perhaps, but not less earnest—the multitude of brave men and women who have striven to wring an answer from Eternity, because Eternity has become the shelter of those they loved. A flash along the wire, and their focus of interest suddenly changed from the world of flesh to the world of the spirit. It was as if a door had been slammed in the face of their love. But their intuition told them that the door had a key. Where was hand brave enough and strong enough to turn it? They appealed to the Church;

but the key of Peter did not fit. "The door is closed," said Christianity; "but have no fear. What is beyond is peace and the presence of God." But that did not content them. And so they made their way to the seats of Science. And Medicine smiled at them. "The door was closed painlessly," it said. And that was all. Then, in their distraction, they cried to the students of the spirit Life, where they sat amid the gibes of the world we call polite. And the answer came back clear and strong: "We will open the door for you. Hark! You can hear the voices whispering on the other side. They were not very clear to your ears, but clear they will become. If you cannot understand what they are saying now, yet we promise you shall understand it by and by."

Many of the things those seekers have reported to us are, indeed, too hard a revelation. The method of life in the next world, the almost petty details of order and routine, the vague conceptions of time and space and environment—how can our definite consciousness make those things its own? But growth we can understand, and development and education and the Good. And it is those things which we desire to know. For those things make happiness—and it is to happiness that all our longing tends.

Why has the Church kept such still silence? It cannot be that she is afraid, nor can it be that she is not possessed of guidance. Is there a traditional numbness that makes her always a few yards behind in the race of modern revelation? This subject of communication between the worlds is not the only one in which she has proved inadequate to the fevered questions of those who

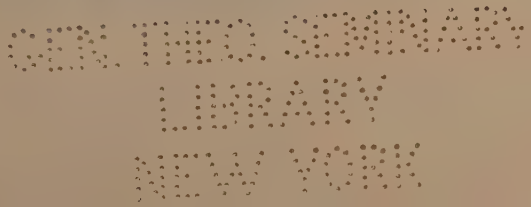
look to her for leadership. She has nothing very much to say about the power of mind over matter in some categories of sickness. Nor has she evolved a social doctrine that is abreast of modern problems. Nor did she outline her teaching very forcibly on the issues of Peace and War. Instead of leading she is inclined to follow. And the great laymen of the age step in where priest and prophet fear to tread.

Hence no apology is needed for placing on our ecclesiastical billboards the sign, "Wanted—an Orthodoxy of the Psychic." We, who are ministers of the Gospel of Christ, must go with our people into the valley of the shadows even if we are not drawn there ourselves by a personal knowledge of loss. They come to us for help, in those dark hours when the genius of sorrow gives them utterance, and beg for something that will mitigate the longing. Must we ever put them off with the beautiful promise of a distant fellowship with God? That promise is true—gloriously true. But it is a promise of a future feast when what we need is a crust to keep us from starving. Of course there is no minister worthy of the name who does not construe something from his own experience to give the comfort that he can. But he would feel safer, happier, more distinctly a member of the fellowship of Christendom, if the great voice of the Church echoed with the syllables of a pronouncement. All the dogmas that life requires have not yet been made articulate. The truth needs reinterpretation for successive generations of men. And as of old they taught us how to believe in God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and linked those formulas of belief with words

which no one need ever change, so now we should not be afraid to add the rest—the new dogmas which love has hoped would, in God's season, be revealed, and experience has verified.

It may with justice be asked whether the experience has been sufficiently universal to warrant the solemnity of an authorized profession. Judging from the number of books dealing with the subject it would assuredly seem that it had. And the countless individuals who have made no written record of their testimony become a veritable cloud of witnesses. Twenty million persons died directly or indirectly owing to the war. These twenty million deaths were, as it were, out of season—an unexpected harvest for the reapers on beyond. Their passing cannot have left their generation unmoved. Those who were left behind sought after them, followed them with the eyes of faith, spoke to them with the words of anguish and of love. Never before could the demands for an answer have been so impassioned. Never before has it seemed so fitting that that answer should be given. We believe it has been given and is being given. And the multitude seems to believe it, too. All we ask is that the Holy Spirit, through the Church, will tell us what it is.

In the hope that some competent guide will take up the challenge, the suggestions in the preceding essays are made. They do not constitute an answer to the enquiry; but they are penned in the belief that they give an indication of where the answer must lie.



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